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JUNIE'S LOVE TEST.

BY

LAURA JEAN LIBBEY,

AUTHOR OF

"Parted on Her Bridal Tour," or "Miss Middleton's Lover,"
"When His Love Grew Cold," "He Loved, But Was
Lured Away," "When Lovely Maiden Stoops
to Folly," "The Crime of Hallow E'en,"
"Lovers Once, But Strangers
Now," Etc., Etc.

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PROLOGUE.

"The sweetest boon e'er given to woman, and yet the greatest curse, is—love."

OH! wicked city of New York—cruel, mysterious city of New York—where crime peeps forth with the setting sun and on-coming night, and stalks boldly abroad under the dim, flickering light of the stars!

As the last vibrations of the midnight hour died away in the tall towers and belfries, a young girl, heavily veiled, and alone, threaded her way swiftly yet tremblingly at every step through the dark, shadowy streets of the great city toward the Brooklyn Bridge, that rose dark and silent, spanning the shadowy East River, and clasping the two slumbering cities in its dark embrace.

A cold, drizzling rain was falling, and a thick, gray mist was slowly curling up from the dark water.

With a low, quivering moan the young girl clasped the frail bundle she carried in her arms closer to her breast; then, with an energy born of utter desperation, pushed steadily on.

Owing to the lateness of the hour and the storm, the bridge was almost deserted by pedestrians save the patrolmen slowly pacing their beats to and fro, who took little heed of the silent, dark-robed, slender little figure stealing quietly on stealthily as a shadow.

About midway on the bridge she paused, casting quick, furtive glances to the right and to the left.

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No one was within sight, and with a quick, spasmodic movement she swept back the folds of her veil and gazed down at the water below, then, with a shudder, up at the cold, un pitying clouds overhead. The flickering light from the electric lamps fell full upon her face—a lovely, horror-stricken, childish face, as beautiful as a dream, framed in a mass of pale-golden hair, tossed wantonly about by the sportive breeze. Her trembling lips tried to utter a prayer, but the words died away in a bitter wail.

“It is too late now,” she sobbed, wringing her little white hands together in utter abandonment; “my sin has been too great for that. God could not forgive, nor could man forget it. There is no room for me in the great cold world; it has narrowed down—to a grave. I’m hunted down. Oh, my love! my love!” she cried, “perhaps you will pity me when they tell you how I died, and, dying, loved you still, cruelly, bitterly false though you were. No one knows of the dark secret I have guarded so well. The terrible truth can not be wrung from lips sealed in death. Forgive me, my angel mother,” she wailed, holding out her hands piteously to the dark sky, “forgive me! Let the world say I died in the cold, dark water. ’Tis false, all false—I died of a broken heart! How can one live when one’s heart is broken?”

The wild winds around her sung a requiem, and the measured wash of the waves a solemn dirge. So young and so fair—so gloriously fair—yet so bitterly tired of life—life which should have held such golden beauty for her, carrying down with her into the dark depths the terrible secret which would startle the great city on the morrow, as New York, steeped as it is in misery, suffering, crime, and sin, had never been startled before.

There was a quick, shuddering gasp, a murmured word, “Forgive!” and the beautiful dark-robed young girl plunged madly from the Brooklyn Bridge. There was a cry and a splash; then the waters of the East River flowed

onward, without a ripple to show where they had closed
over that golden head.

“The bleak winds of March made her tremble and shiver,
But not the dark arch, or the black flowing river,
Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurled—
Anywhere, anywhere out of the world.”

In the after-pages of this romance the key to this dark
mystery will be found; also, the startling *dénouement* that
followed on the morrow, flashed broadcast over the land
under the caption, “A Startling New York Mystery!”

JUNIE'S LOVE-TEST.

CHAPTER I.

"There's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream."

THE early morning sunshine was just peeping over the Kentucky hills, glinting with a touch of gold the waving wheat-fields and the hay-ricks upon which Farmer Dean gazed from the door-way.

Down in the orchard, by the side of a little brook, which separated the farm from the main road, a golden curly head popped up from among the sweet pink clover, dashing off spiritedly a few notes of a bright, gay song, then suddenly stopped short. "There!" cried Fanny Dean, triumphantly, "didn't I tell you, father, Junie's heart wasn't broken because you refused to let her go to the moonlight party in the glen to-night? Not five minutes ago she was sobbing as if her heart would break, and now she has forgotten all about it."

"Bless the child," muttered the farmer, with his eyes still fixed on the distant golden curly head in the clover, "I'm half sorry I didn't consent to let the child go."

"No wonder Junie never knows her own mind two minutes at a time, and can't stick to a resolution after she makes it; she takes after father for that," cried Fanny Dean, two great angry spots burning in her cheeks, and her black eyes blazing wrathfully. "It would spoil all our fun if Junie went, for there's just twelve young gentlemen, and exactly twelve of us girls, so you see Junie would

be one too many. She would have no escort," said Fanny, spitefully.

"Lord bless you, the child wouldn't mind that a bit," maintained the farmer, good-humoredly. "What does a child of sixteen need of an escort? You could take her along with yours!"

"She shall *not* go with me, depend upon it!" cried Fanny, white to her very lips with rage.

"It's just as well for Junie to stop at home," sighed Mrs. Dean, wearily. "The child has nothing fit to wear. Squire Lane's daughters will be there, and the Williamsons, and all the best people hereabouts, and Junie would look shabby enough in her lawn dress alongside of Fanny's fine new tarlatan and the other girls' dresses."

"Little Junie would have looked the queen of them all," declared the farmer, warmly, defending his favorite child. "I guess Fanny's only jealous for fear she will out her out with her bean."

Fanny colored a high crimson, and made him no answer; but the strange, ominous glitter of the black eyes under her long, thick lashes showed that the "shaft at random sent" had struck home. A few moments later Farmer Dean returned to his plowing in the fields.

When he was fairly out of hearing, Fanny turned angrily to her mother: "You ought to have told him he should get one daughter married off before he forces the other into society. Take Junie with me, indeed!" she cried, wrathfully, "and spoil my chance of winning Squire Granger's heir!"

"Your father never thought of those things—men never do," interposed Mrs. Dean, meekly. "Don't worry about it, my dear, Junie shall stop at home. Of course it is out of the question for her father to expect her to go with you and Mr. Granger; it is honor enough for the uncle to send his nephew after one of you."

"I should say so," retorted Fanny, exultantly. "How

every one will envy me, with Squire Granger's heir for my escort!"

"You ought to make a favorable impression on the young man if he is impressible. You are a handsome girl, Fanny."

"I know it," replied the daughter, vainly, "and I mean to capture the heart of the handsome heir during his month's visit to Tanglewood. I never was intended for a farmer's wife. I am different from Junie. I have ambition. I shall lead the grand life of a city lady, and ride in my coach, and have the finest of laces and jewels if I can only get Squire Granger's heir."

Again the gay young voice from the midst of the clover floated out to them like the clear, sharp notes of a mocking-bird in full song, and they fell suddenly, too, and with startling clearness upon the ears of a handsome young man who had just leaped lightly from his saddle, and led his horse to the brink of the clear purling brook to drink, and these were the words he heard:

"When a maiden finds a four-leaved clover,
On that day she'll meet her lover;
She'll know him by her beating heart,
For—"

In an instant the song came to a sudden stop on the ripe, red lips, and a flush, rivaling the deep crimson heart of a rose, spread over the pretty face of the singer, as she met the dark, magnetic eyes of the graceful young horseman bent admiringly upon her.

He saw a beautiful, slender little creature, fairer than a poet's dream, standing just across the brook from him, her pretty little slippered feet almost buried in the pink-and-white clover.

The soft, blue eyes glancing timidly at him from beneath her long curling lashes were as bright as stars; and

in the long, bright, golden hair that framed her pretty face a cluster of scarlet poppies gleamed.

In one hand she held the four-leaved clover, and with the other held back the folds of her pink-dotted muslin dress that barely reached to her slender ankles.

And on that fateful June morning, as Harry Granger stood looking at the beautiful little fairy across the brook, he told himself he had surely "met his fate."

A sudden longing came over him to hear her voice again.

"I am sorry I interrupted such a sweet little song," he said, with a winning smile, as he gracefully touched his hat to her; "but will you tell me, please," he added, hesitatingly, "if this is the right road to Squire Granger's? I am quite a stranger in this locality."

"If you could cut across lots it wouldn't be more than a mile from here, but you couldn't go that way with your horse," she said, with a charming, childish smile.

"No, not very well," he admitted, his dark eyes twinkling.

"Then you will have to go all the way by the main road," she said. "It follows the brook; you can not miss it. The brook runs through Squire Granger's grounds."

"Thank you," he replied, again touching his hat to her; and as there was not the faintest shadow of an excuse to linger there by the brook and talk with her, he vaulted gracefully into his saddle again and rode slowly away, pausing to look back at her from the brow of the hill, his heart giving a strange throb as he observed she was gazing at him, her pretty little hands shading her eyes from the sun's level rays.

"He is going to Squire Granger's," she murmured. "He will be sure to be at the moonlight party, too;" and at the thought of it her grievance of an hour before, which she had quite forgotten, rose fresh in her mind. "Oh, how I wish I were going," she sobbed, flinging herself face

downward in the long, green grass. "I never was at a party in all my life. How mean of papa to refuse me! It was all Fanny's fault, though; but I will go to that party!" she cried, defiantly, dashing the pearly tear-drops from her long, quivering lashes; "and I will do worse than Cinderella did who took away Prince Charming from all the rest. I will take away Fanny's beau, and dance with him all the evening just for pure spite. Won't it be fun, though, and won't she be angry?"

At that moment something white on the other side of the brook caught her eye.

"It's that—that—young gentleman's handkerchief," she cried; and in a moment she had balanced herself on the toes of her tiny slippers and cleared the brook with the grace of a young gazelle.

Something besides the handkerchief was there—something was wrapped carefully within its folds. With all the curiosity of one of the descendants of Mother Eve, Junie quickly unwrapped it, when lo! a photograph was disclosed to her astonished gaze.

She started back with a little sharp cry. It was the portrait of the handsome young man who had just ridden away. The dark, magnetic eyes seemed to smile up into her own.

Junie's poor, foolish little heart was beating terribly, and she could almost fancy she saw the handsome mustached lips move, and that they were saying :

"When a maiden finds a four-leaved clover
On that day she'll meet her lover,
She'll know him by her beating heart,
For love is of each life a part."

"I wonder if all signs come true," she said, blushing furiously. "I have found a four-leaved clover, and my heart is beating awfully, but I—I haven't met a lover yet unless—unless it is *he*."

She looked at the photograph again, and hid her rosy, flushing face in her little fluttering fingers.

Just at that moment she caught sight of her father standing by one of the haystacks out in the fields. In a moment she was by his side.

"What is the matter, pet?" exclaimed Farmer Dean, as Junie rushed pell-mell into his arms, panting with excitement and her cheeks all aglow. "Has Brindle broken down the fence? or has mother scolded you for some naughty prank? or are you and Fanny on the outs again? Tell father what's the matter with his little Junie."

As he spoke, he leaned one rough, toil-hardened hand on the plow, stroking Junie's tumbled, disordered curls with the other.

"It isn't that!" panted Junie, breathlessly. "I have found something. Isn't it pretty?"

Farmer Dean took the portrait from her fingers, and proceeded to examine it leisurely through his spectacles.

"Pretty!" he exclaimed, frowning. "I can't see what young girls can see in faces like this to attract 'em—curly hair, bold black eyes, and a mustache. If I'm any judge of faces, there's something amiss here. He don't look frank and honest about the eyes and mouth; he don't look like a man to be trusted. Throw away this picture. Little girls shouldn't have such bold, bad pictures about."

"But I found it. Surely there is no harm in my keeping it, if I wish," persisted Junie, stoutly, provoked and considerably crest-fallen because her father did not share her glowing, golden opinion of the handsome stranger.

"Certainly not," declared her father, tossing it into some adjacent bushes. "You might be keeping something that belongs in the Rogues' Gallery. You don't know whose picture it is, do you?" he asked, suddenly, glancing quickly at her from over the rim of his spectacles.

"How should I know who he is?" answered Junie,

evasively. "I told you I just found it down by the brook."

She turned slowly away as she spoke, and walked toward the house.

If Farmer Dean had turned around from the other end of the field, he would have seen little Junie hurriedly retrace her steps, and slip the coveted portrait from the blackberry bush where her father had tossed it, and flit quickly back to the house again.

All that day the thoughts of going to the moonlight party flitted through Junie's little brain. The poor child was very young, very romantic, and very foolish, and she found herself wondering more than once if the dark-eyed stranger would be there, and if she ought to give him back the portrait she prized so much.

Squire Granger's invitation, and also a little note which had accompanied it, lay on the table before her, and once again she ran her bright, mischievous eyes over the brief note. The postscript read:

"I shall send my nephew over for either or both of the young ladies. Although a stranger to you, I trust you will allow him the pleasure of escorting them over.

"Yours sincerely, SAMUEL GRANGER."

"Ah, I have it!" exclaimed mischievous little Junie, clapping her hands with wild exultation. "I know just how I can go to the party, and have an escort, too, and spite Fan for her meanness in not taking me more than anything else on earth. I will dress myself up in my best, and go down to the lane and meet Squire Granger's heir, and tell him I am the one he is to escort to the party to-night. He has never seen Fan or me, and he won't suspect the joke; and Fan will be waiting in the best room, all fixed up with her new white tarlatan, just fuming with rage because he don't come, while I shall be at the beautiful moonlight party dancing with ~~her~~ magnificent beau, who

was such great expectations; and perhaps, too, if he asks me, I might dance just once with that stranger, if he is there. There wouldn't be any harm in it to dance just once with him."

CHAPTER II.

"'Twas a pity the lassie gave her heart
To one who haughtily stood apart."

ALL that day Junie flitted about the house with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, perfecting her arrangements for attending the party, quite unobserved by either her mother or Fanny.

The gray dusk of evening had slowly "drawn its sable curtains around the sleeping earth and pinned them with a star" as Junie stole quietly from the house and made her way across the melon patch and through the blossoming orchard to the lane, her white ribbons and golden hair fluttering in the breeze.

She had not long to wait; in a few moments she observed Squire Granger's carriage coming leisurely down the road.

Mischievous little Junie never intended for one moment to cheat her sister Fanny of the evening's enjoyment; she meant that the young heir should escort her over there, then she would confess to him the deception she had practiced, and he would return at once for Fanny; when it was over she could return home by herself if necessary.

Another moment and the carriage dashed up the lane, and its occupant, a young man, sprung quickly from the vehicle, observing the little figure in white standing by the gate, and made his way toward where she stood.

As he turned his face toward her Junie started back with a little confused cry; it was her hero of the morning, the handsome, dark-eyed young stranger whose portrait at that very moment was hidden in the pocket of her dress.

Little Junie would have fled precipitately from him back to the house, but he sprung directly in the path before her with eager, undisguised delight.

"Can it be possible you are Miss Dean whom my uncle wished me to escort to the party to-night? I scarcely dreamed fortune had such happiness in store for me. Allow me to introduce myself—I am Harry Granger, Squire Granger's nephew."

Junie never remembered how she answered him; her thoughts were muddled confusedly in her brain, and her heart was beating so loudly she felt that he must surely hear it. Yet she allowed him to place her in the carriage, and they were soon whirling rapidly in the direction of Squire Granger's.

The night was a perfect one; the moon was at the full, shedding a flood of soft, silvery light clear as noonday on the sleeping flowers and trees; the sky was aglow with glittering stars, and the soft, subtle fragrance of a summer night lay over the land.

It was just the night for a moonlight party, and the glen lying back of Squire Granger's grounds was just the place for it, so romantic and picturesque-looking—a broad stretch of level land hedged in on either side by high, almost perpendicular, green, grassy hills.

The glen was all the more attractive because it held a mystery, in the shape of a calm, peaceful lake, which was fed by a tiny babbling brook leaping down the hill-side, but the lake was not known to have an outlet. No one could tell what became of all the water that it gathered in its bosom. It was thought by many to be bottomless.

Revelry and mirth were at their height when they drew up before the entrance gate. Great rows of colored lamps, rivaling the rainbow's hues, hung suspended from the trees, and flaming bunting was wound around the green branches.

The broad lake gleamed like a sheet of silver, with the light of the stars mirrored on its bosom.

The lively, exhilarating music and gay laughter of merry maidens and their beaux made this, the first party which Junie had ever beheld, seem like a bewildering, intoxicating glance into fairy-land.

Poor, guilty little Junie, feeling very much like a culprit as Harry Granger led her gracefully forward, drew a deep breath and laughed a little soft, wondering laugh, thinking how cleverly she had outwitted Fanny.

"Where's Fanny?" cried several of the young girls, gathering around her. "Isn't she coming?"

"I guess so," stammered Junie, unconsciously tightening her clasp upon Harry Granger's arm, and feeling her face grow burning hot. "I'm expecting her every minute."

"I will wait until after I have just one dance," thought conscious Junie, glancing timidly up into the handsome face beside her. "I'm sure it won't be any harm."

"What a bewitching little darling she is!" thought Harry Granger, admiringly. "I wish to Heaven I had known her sooner—or not at all!"

Little Junie's fair beauty, so rare and so youthful, produced a decided effect upon the gentlemen present, as she whirled through the mazes of the waltz with Harry Granger. She was, beyond all dispute, the queen of the moonlight party.

"What a shame it is for little Junie Dean to set herself up for a young lady, and dance every set with Squire Granger's heir," more than one jealous girl whispered, spitefully; "and all the gentlemen have no eyes for any one but her," they cried. "I can not imagine what Fanny Dean can be thinking of to let her carry on so—the way she is flirting with young Granger is scandalous—yes, it is shocking."

Utterly oblivious to the comments of the angry, cha-

grined maidens, little Junie was enjoying herself with as much zest as the far-famed Cinderella of fairy lore. The moments seemed to float by on golden wings—poor little Junie forgot her intention of sending Squire Granger's heir back to the house for Fanny—child-like, she forgot everything in the elysium of the moment.

The wine of flattered vanity was steeping her senses, and the poor child rushed heedlessly on in the path of roses that led toward a precipice.

"You seem tired, Junie," said Harry, at length, adopting the pretty, fanciful name by which the others addressed her. "Supposing we take a sail on the lake? Would you like it, or are you afraid danger lurks in the fair, smiling water?"

"No, I am not afraid," cried Junie, with a gay little laugh. "Papa says anything dangerous has a wonderful fascination for me. I would dearly love to go out on the lake in that dear little boat!" she cried, enthusiastically, clapping her tiny hands.

But one thought occurred to Harry Granger—out on the water, far removed from listening ears, no one would hear what he had to say to her.

When they were far away from shore, he rested on his sculls and let the little boat drift where it would.

Although but three-and-twenty, he had seen as much of life as most young men of his age, perhaps more.

Little Junie's sweet, childish face, with her bright, roguish eyes and curling red-ripe saucy lips, was certainly a picture to make any young man's heart throb with the mysterious witchery of love's bewitching dream; and it was natural enough that the handsome, impulsive young heir fell heedlessly in love straightway with the charming little maiden.

Love, with warm-blooded youth, is not a plant of slow growth. The quick, subtle glances of eyes that have never

met before may awaken it, the thrilling magnetism of a voice, or the touch of a hand.

And as for poor, foolish, romantic little Junie, she was wondering what new, beautiful spell had come over her, why the moonlight seemed more brilliant, and the trees and the flowers more mystically sweet than ever before. She never once dreamed she was taking the first draught from Love's magic cup, which she was to drain to the bitter dregs.

She forgot her handsome companion was quite a stranger, as he talked to her in his charming, winning way, as she sat with clasped hands, gazing into his face, drinking in each word as it fell from his lips.

Suddenly he reached forward, and clasped the little lily-white hand trailing idly along in the limpid silvery water.

"Do you know what I have been wishing for the last half hour, Junie?" he said, a flush stealing over his handsome boyish face.

She drew her little white hand away from him with a merry, willful laugh that made his blood tingle deliciously in his veins as she answered, roguishly:

"How should I know your secret thoughts, mysterious knight, unless—unless," she added, shyly, "that you should tell them to me?"

"I was wondering if you really believed in fate," he answered, in a low, intense voice. "Do you, Junie?"

"I—I—don't—know," she faltered, timidly. "I have never thought much about it."

"Shall I tell you what I thought as I rode away from the brook where we first met?"

He could see the fair, flower-like face opposite him grow as crimson as the dewy passion roses that trembled on her breast, but she did not answer him.

"I was thinking," he went on, eagerly, "that on this eventful June morning 'I had met my fate,' and, if the

beautiful song you were singing is true, you must have met yours, Junie, for:

“ ‘ When a maiden finds a four leaved clover,
On that day she'll meet her lover;
She'll know him by her beating heart,
For love is of each life a part. ’ ”

he sung out, gayly, his dark eyes twinkling, and his rich, full voice floating out over the rippling water.

“ You are cruel to remind me of—of that,” cried Junie, pouting petulantly. “ I—I—never once dreamed any one was around.”

“ But that does not answer my question,” persisted the handsome young fellow, wickedly. “ Did fate redeem her promise to the finder of the four-leaved clover yet?”

“ I shall never, never tell you,” declared Junie, willfully. “ You have no right to ask me;” and the pretty little blush and the sudden drooping of the long, curling lashes over her bright blue eyes made him more desperately in love with her than ever.

He longed to take her in his arms and kiss her, but he did not dare. She was like a timid young fawn. If he startled her too suddenly, he would lose her forever. She was not a young girl to be easily won.

He took up his oars again, and rowed silently toward the shore, and as he assisted little Junie to *terra firma*, a white-robed figure, leaning on his uncle's arm, came hurriedly down the path.

“ Oh, it's Fanny! it's Fanny!” cried little Junie, with a gasp, all the beautiful color fading in an instant from her face. “ Oh, don't quite hate me!” she cried, incoherently, and in deep distress. “ I did not mean to do wrong, but I was so happy here with you I quite forgot Fanny was waiting;” and in a moment, in a few broken gasps poor little Junie confessed what she had done, ending, pitifully. “ Fanny will never, oh, never! forgive me. I

she had set her heart so on coming with you—for you are Squire Granger's heir, you know."

Junie's very artlessness and innocence in admitting how happy she had been here with him, and Fanny's expectations in regard to himself, amused the young man vastly.

"I will come over to see you to-morrow, if you will permit me, little Junie. Then I can explain to Fanny and your father how the mistake—which was a very happy one for me—came about."

"Oh, don't do that!" cried Junie, with a frightened, startled glance, remembering what her father had said about the portrait. "Father would not like you to come and see me. I am sure he would not."

"Then will you come to me where we first met, down by the brook? I can not lose you so, without the hope of seeing you soon again," he urged. "Promise me you will meet me there to-morrow."

The warm, rich color surged over her face in a rosy flood, the magnetic glance of his dark, passionate eyes seemed swaying her very soul, and her infatuated little heart beat as it had never beat before. A night-bird above their heads, swaying to and fro on the bough of an adjacent tree, uttered a little piteous, protesting cry as it fluttered away over the water. Even the night wind as it tossed her golden curls seemed to whisper, "Junie, Junie, beware, beware!" But if she heard, she did not heed them, and she shyly whispered:

"Yes," just as Fanny Dean, white with wrath, and her black eyes gleaming with a strange, unfathomable fire, leaning upon Squire Granger's arm, quickly joined them.

After acknowledging the introduction to the handsome young heir, she turned to her sister.

"Papa has sent for you, Junie, dear," she said, sweetly, "and the squire has kindly volunteered to take you home. I am sure Mr. Granger will excuse you."

Junie felt certain, by her sister's sweet, purring manner

toward her, that a terrible storm of some kind was brewing, and when they were once alone together, a tornado of wrath would surely explode on her luckless head.

Quite reluctantly Harry relinquished her, and as she passed Fanny in the path, under the pretext of straightening Junie's hat, she bent down and hissed, with all the venom of a deadly serpent, in Junie's startled ear:

"The squire has something to say to you, girl, and look to it that you do not refuse!"

And, all unconscious of the terrible blow in store for her, poor little Junie Dean went blindly on to her fate.

CHAPTER III.

"Brothers—twins—yet foes as well—
A modern Cain and Abel."

THE next morning at sunrise found Harry Granger, the squire's handsome young heir, walking impatiently up and down by the brook-side, eagerly waiting for Junie. But no Junie came.

The sun climbed higher and higher in the heavens until the wild flowers and beautiful star-grasses drooped in its languishing heat; but still no signs of Junie. A strange uneasiness crept over him like the foreshadowing of coming ill. All night long a beautiful, rognish, girlish face, with lovely pansy-blue eyes and saucy, curling red lips, had flashed through the young man's feverish dreams, and when daylight broke he found himself actually counting the hours until he should see her again.

Now he knew what the poets meant when they sung of "love at first sight." He had always laughed at the idea before, and now it had happened to him. The very first glance from Junie's bright eyes had taken the citadel of his heart by storm.

And standing there by the brook-side, he told himself that the impassioned poet was not wrong.

"Oh, love! young love,
Let saints and cynics cavil as they will,
One throb of yours is worth whole years of ill,"

must certainly have fallen in love with some pretty, dimple-faced girl like Junie Dean to inspire such a true sentiment.

Terribly disheartened and disappointed, Harry was on the point of turning away, when the sound of footsteps fell upon his ear, and through the trees in the orchard he caught sight of Junie's white dress and crimson ribbons. Some one was with her, and one glance at the honest, toil-hardened, bronzed face told him intuitively it must be Farmer Dean.

Harry could not endure that Junie should go back to the house without giving him the privilege of speaking with her a moment at least, and with the recklessness so characteristic of him, he cleared the brook at a single bound and called her name.

Young ears are keener than old ones. Junie turned in the path, looking back with a startled glance, making a hasty sign of caution.

"She will come to the brook, now that she knows I am waiting for her here," thought Harry, complacently seating himself on a fallen mossy log.

He was right. A light, fleet step presently sounded on the soft, green grass, and pretty little Junie, flushed and trembling with excitement and emotion, appeared before him.

There was no smile of welcome for him on the ripe red lips, and the lovely blue eyes were drowned in tears.

"Junie, little Junie," he cried, springing forward and clasping her hands eagerly in his, "what is the matter? [—]"

Junie drew her hands swiftly away from him, hiding her pretty, tear-stained face in her fluttering fingers as she

threw herself down on the green grass with all the utter abandonment of a child, sobbing bitterly:

"Something awful has happened, Mr. Granger," she gasped, "something so terrible that I wish I were dead."

The hot blood of youth flowed in Harry's veins, and it was not in human nature to see tear-drops in those pretty eyes unmoved; so he straightway lifted the drooping little figure to a seat on the fallen log beside him—dangerously near—and imprisoning one of her little white hands in his, begged her to tell him what was the matter.

At first she refused to tell him.

"Perhaps I can help you, little Junie," he said, earnestly. "I would do anything—I would risk my very life to save you one moment's pain, if you will only trust me with your secret."

"But you couldn't help me in this case," she sighed, tearing desperately at the deep crimson roses she held in her hand. "I—I have got to marry somebody, and—and oh, I hate him so!" cried little Junie, through her tears.

If a sharp blaze of lightning had suddenly darted from the sky above and pierced his heart in twain in a single instant, Harry Granger could not have been more startled at the sudden shattering of his beautiful love-dream. He dropped the little hand that he held, and started to his seat, with a face pale as death.

In a moment he realized how deeply he loved her, and how dark and drear the world would be to him without her. He could hardly believe he had heard aright.

"Oh, I hate him so! I hate him so!" murmured poor little Junie, brokenly.

"Then why marry him?" cried Harry, his handsome, boyish face flushing eagerly with a gleam of sudden hope.

"Oh, I must, I must!" sighed Junie, bitterly. "If I do not marry him, he threatens to turn us away from the farm. He holds a mortgage on it, and it would kill poor

papa to be turned from it in his old age, a pauper, cast adrift on the world, homeless, penniless."

"But you must not be sacrificed. What man is so inhuman as to demand it? Youth, love, and happiness are not to be bartered in that fashion. Who is the man that is such a tyrant as to demand it?" he cried, hotly, revolving all sorts of rash deeds in his head to prevent it; but the answer she made him almost took his breath away.

"It—was—your—your uncle, Squire Granger," she faltered, her pretty, dimpled face turning from pink to white; "and he threatened all sorts of things besides turning us away," sobbed Junie, afresh. "He said if I refused, his vengeance would follow me as long as he lived."

Something that sounded very much like an imprecation came from the young man's lips as he staggered back against a tree, muttering, hoarsely:

"Good heavens! I have always known that he was capable of any villainy, even if he is my uncle, but I would never have believed he could use any power he held to force a young girl of sixteen into marrying him, and he fully fifty."

"There is no way to help it," sobbed Junie. "I must do it for papa's sake, and mamma's."

"How much is the mortgage?" asked Harry, thoughtfully, kneeling down on the soft green moss by her side. "Tell me—how much, Junie?"

"Oh, ever so much—a whole fortune—a thousand dollars!" she gasped.

Poor Harry manfully repressed a groan that rose to his lips. A thousand dollars! Again his ardent hopes were dashed against the hard, cruel rock of fate. If he borrowed of every one he knew—sold every article he possessed on earth, his dainty diamond stud, his watch, his seal ring, and all, it would not bring him a quarter of the coveted sum. Quite penniless, a dependent upon his capricious uncle, he was powerless to aid her in *that* way.

He bent his handsome, dark head over her little white hands in utter despair. Then suddenly he looked up, a gleam of hope on his flushed boyish face.

"Do not lose courage, Junie," he cried. "I will find some way out of this for you, if you will only trust to me. If I can not persuade my uncle to another course, there is still a way of escape from that marriage which makes me shudder even to think of. Shall I tell you what that way is, Junie? I never intended to tell you so soon, but—"

"Junie! Junie!" called a voice so near him that Harry jumped to his feet, startled, confused, and annoyed, and little Junie sprung from her seat on the fallen log, with a crimson, dismayed face, to meet Fanny's dangerously dark sparkling eyes bent upon her with a gleam of deadly malice and triumph in their depths which the mocking smile on her lips could not conceal.

"*You* here, Mr. Granger? Why, dear me, what a surprise!" cried Fanny, in well-feigned astonishment as her black eyes fell upon the young man's flushed face.

Neither of them suspected for one moment that she had been concealed behind the tall bushes, had witnessed their meeting, and heard every word that they uttered, until, boiling with rage, and goaded to desperation at the avowal which she knew trembled on the young man's lips, she sprung from her concealment directly into the path before them, instantly preventing such a catastrophe.

Harry raised his hat courteously to her, murmuring some polite reply, inwardly wishing she had not made her appearance there just at that inopportune moment. As there was no help for it, he was obliged to bear it as graciously as possible.

"I have been looking everywhere for you, Junie," she said, flinging herself down in a picturesquely graceful attitude on the green, mossy log. "There is some one up at the house who wishes to see you."

"Good-bye, Mr. Granger," said Junie, extending her little white hand to him.

"Do not say good-bye—rather *au revoir*," said Harry, clasping fervently the little pink, fluttering palm, and wishing that the dark-eyed girl who sat on the mossy log watching them so intently was a thousand miles away.

Another moment, and Junie was gone, and he was alone with her sister Fanny.

A sudden, unaccountable impulse came over him to make a confidante of Fanny—a fatal impulse that he was to rue all the years of his after-life.

An hour later Harry Granger parted from Fanny at the foot of the lane. As she watched the tall, handsome, lithe figure disappearing down the path, she broke out into a low, mocking, mirthless laugh.

"Fool!" she cried, clinching her hands furiously together, "to think I will help you break off Junie's plighted troth with your uncle, that *you* may marry her yourself! Would I decorate my own grave, think you—the grave of all my hopes—and my love? Ha! Harry Granger, your love might have made an angel of me if it had been mine; but the very thought of another basking in the smiles that would have been my heaven has changed me to a fiend incarnate. No one shall come between us—I swear it! How little he dreams," she cried out, excitedly, "that it was *I* who first proposed the startling thought of making Junie his wife to the hot-headed squire, for revenge, when I found she had outwitted me and gone with you to the moonlight party! Even a sister's love can turn to deadly hate when love steps in between them. I shall never know a moment's peace again until Junie is Squire Granger's wife. Then your heart will turn to me in the rebound. You shall love me yet, cold, proud, unbending heart, in spite of heaven or earth—ay, in spite of your own will! You shall see how a girl, rendered desperate, will

shrink not at the darkest crime, if a rival wins in the race of love, to sweep that rival from her path!"

From that time on, during the next month that followed, although the young lover haunted the brook like one distracted, and called at the farm on every possible pretext, and lingered as long as he reasonably could, he could never find himself alone by any possible chance for a single moment with little Junie.

Innumerable little notes were slipped into Fanny's hand for Junie, imploring her to meet him just once more down by the brook-side, he had something so important to tell her.

But these luckless little notes poor little Junie never received. Fanny always came to the trysting-place alone, declaring, sympathetically: "Junie steadily refuses to come," and without a thought of her artful duplicity, he turned to the beautiful, dangerous schemer for consolation and pity, walking blindly into the trap so cleverly set for him.

Preparations, which nearly maddened poor Harry, went steadily on for the wedding, which was to take place at the farm-house a week from that day.

The Grange was being refitted and refurnished elaborately for the beautiful young bride who was so soon to occupy it.

Poor Harry endured it as long as he could, and on the evening preceding the wedding angry voices were heard in the direction of the squire's library, and a moment later the young heir, with face pale as death and his eyes blazing like stars, stood on the threshold, with his handsome head thrown proudly back, his dark, piercing eyes bent full upon his uncle, who stood behind him fairly livid with rage.

"Have I not told you to go? Leave my house forever! never darken my door again!" shouted the old man, fairly quivering with wrath. "Not a dollar of my money shall

ever go to you, ingrate that you are! To dare tell me—me—you have aspired to love the young girl I intend to make my wife, and that you will attempt to prevent it if you can! You! an ingrate and a beggar, dependent upon my charity, attempting to expostulate with me! You are no better than that miserable twin brother Henry, who has sold his soul to the devil long ago, while you pretend to be a saint,” sneered the exasperated old man, fairly foaming with rage.

At the mention of his twin brother Henry's name, Harry Granger's proud face paled, and he held up his hand with an imperative warning gesture—this twin brother, who was his bitterest foe.

“Will you go?” cried Squire Granger, pointing to the door. “Leave my roof, I say! You shall never inherit a dollar of my money or darken my door again.”

“I obey you, sir,” replied the young man, haughtily; “and as for your money, I do not care for it. I can make my own way in the world; but mark my words, if you attempt to force little Junie Dean into marrying you you will bitterly rue it.”

“Do you dare threaten me?” cried the exasperated old man.

“I repeat that you will bitterly rue it,” responded the young man, hotly, as he turned hastily on his heel and quitted the room and the house forever.

Was it chance, or the cruel mockery of fate that led him on, that bright moonlight night, when the face of Nature seemed so fair and free from woe, down to the brook where he had first met Junie? The cool wind fanned his heated brow.

“I must make a desperate attempt to see Junie before the midnight train goes,” he muttered, thoughtfully, as he leaned against one of the tall cedar-trees, gazing anxiously at the farm-house lying so quiet and still on the brow of the hill in the soft white moonlight. “I am sure

that Junie loves me," he whispered, hoarsely. "I can read her secret in every glance of those pretty blue eyes, and, by Heaven! she shall be mine!"

As if in answer to his thoughts a little white-robed figure fluttered down the path toward the brook.

One glance at the beautiful childish face framed in a sheen of golden hair told him it was Junie. Fate had been kind to him.

One moment more and Harry Granger was kneeling in the clover at her feet, covering her hands with passionate kisses as he murmured her name.

The soft, brooding fragrance of the summer night lay over the land, and every odorous breeze seemed whispering, "How sweet life would be if Junie shared it with me!"

His love made the handsome, impulsive young heir recklessly desperate. He threw prudence to the winds. She had looked her last upon the little farm-house lying so peacefully under the starlight. He would talk with her, plead with her, as a man never pleaded before, to fly with him, and if she would not go willingly, there was another way.

"I would rather see my beautiful little love lying before me cold in death than see her married to Squire Granger! I shall outwit him. 'All is fair in love's warfare!'" he told himself, and in a moment he had forged the first links in one of the sweetest of love's romances, which would end, alas! in one of the cruellest tragedies.

Yet young hearts will still yearn for love, e'en though they weep over poor little Junie Dean's folly; for—

"'Tis ever the way of the foolish fair
To die for the one who does not care."

CHAPTER IV.

"JUNIE, little Junie, you have come to me at last!" cried Harry, delightedly. "When you refused to answer my notes or see me, the very torture of it nearly drove me mad!"

In the clear, pure starlight he saw her face grow pale and her lips tremble, as she raised her blue eyes wonderingly to his face and faltered:

"I—I did not know you wanted to see me. Fanny gave me the message you sent, that you thought it best for me to marry your uncle, when you thought it all over carefully. Then I lost all hope—all hope!"

Every pathetic word, and the tearless sob she uttered, pierced poor Harry's heart like a sword-thrust.

"Did Fanny tell you that?" he cried, breathlessly, his dark, handsome face paling with amazement and indignation. "You and I have both been bitterly deceived, Junie!" he declared, vehemently. "I never sent such a message. On the contrary, I have sent notes to you by Fanny every day, beseeching you to meet me here to hear what I had to say to you, little Junie; but your sister always brought me the same answer—that you refused to come."

He saw the beautiful red lips part in dismay, but she would not speak the words that trembled on them, acknowledging the falsity and cruelty of her sister Fanny; and Harry respected her silence, although he could readily see the terrible discovery burst upon her and shocked her pure, innocent, truth-loving soul.

Harry led her quietly to the mossy log and seated her upon it, but he did not seat himself by her side. He stood before her, with his arms tightly folded over his breast, leaning against the trunk of a tree, where he could watch

every expression that crossed Junie's beautiful, troubled face in the soft white starlight.

For several moments a deep silence fell between them, broken only by the musical babblings of the brook as it rippled and sparkled in the bright moonlight at their feet.

The odor of blossoms and the sweet, subtle fragrance of the summer night seemed to float around them and infold them.

"My God! my God! how can I give her up calmly to another when I love her so?" was the thought that passed through Harry Granger's mind as he gazed upon that face to take one last mute farewell.

While little Junie thought, as she glanced timidly up into the dark, handsome face before her, "If I had never known this dark-eyed stranger my life might have been different." For the fatal secret had burst suddenly upon her. She who was to marry Squire Granger on the morrow loved his dark-eyed, handsome nephew with all the bewildering strength of her young heart.

"Loved him with a bitter yearning that could never pass away."

Suddenly Harry broke the sweet, subtle silence.

"They tell me to-morrow is your wedding-day, little Junie," he cried, and his low, intense voice trembled with emotion as he spoke, "but I can not realize it—I will not believe it—Heaven would not permit such a sacrifice for the lack of sordid gold."

Junie shook her head.

"It is too late now," she said, piteously. "Squire Granger has canceled the mortgage, and I have promised to marry him to-morrow."

"No, it is not too late!" cried Harry, eagerly. "You shall not throw yourself into this vortex of life-long misery. Oh, little Junie, you may meet some one some day whom you could love—whom you could be happy with. What would you do then, little Junie, if another claimed you?"

"I should shut my heart against all such possibilities," she answered, faintly.

"You could not do it, little Junie," he declared, vehemently. "Love—a true and pure love—is ordained by Heaven itself. You would be powerless to guard your heart against it. Then you would realize, when too late, the sweet possibilities of what might have been."

The beautiful, golden head drooped on her heaving breast. The terrible truth of his words made her heart sick. Young as she was she realized that what he said was but too true.

He threw himself down among the sweet pink clover at her feet, and as the night wind tossed his dark curls about they brushed unwittingly against the little white hand that lay upon the mossy log as though in mute caress.

"Junie," he cried, "it is not too late! Let me save you. You must not, you shall not marry him! If you would, ah! if you would but let me save you from yourself," he continued, with a bitter groan, "I would die to save you—to keep you from such a life-long misery as awaits you if you marry him!"

"You can not save me, Mr. Granger," she murmured. "It is too late."

"Call me Harry," he said, impulsively, bowing his dark, handsome head on the little white hand, "and the music of your voice breathing my name will linger on my senses until I die."

"It is too late now, Harry," she murmured again. "Let me forget that dark to-morrow and be happy now for a few brief moments."

His face flushed and he bent nearer her.

"Then you are happy here with me, Junie?" he questioned, his voice thrilling with delight.

"Why should I not own it?" she answered, with a little smile. "Yes, I am very happy here with you, Harry."

These moments will be the brightest in my lonely life—these few short moments that will so quickly pass.”

In a moment he was kneeling before her, pouring forth a torrent of passionate love that dazzled her by its vehemence.

“Only a few short moments!” he repeated. “A few short moments taken from a life-time! I would purchase such moments with my life, if it were the price. I can understand a man giving his heart for one such gleam of wild delight. I would be willing to suffer all the rest of my life for the supreme happiness of these moments, for I love you, Junie, love you as man never loved before, with the whole strength of my soul, the whole fire of my heart. Great Heaven! when I think of it, my head grows dizzy, my heart beats, I am mad!”

The passion of his words exhausted him, his face grew pale, the sound died upon his lips, and, quite unconsciously, Junie’s hand crept from the mossy log and rested on his dark curls.

“Do you love me so much, Harry?” she asked, wonderingly.

“Only Heaven knows how much,” he said.

He seated himself on the mossy seat beside her, impulsively clasping her in his arms and kissing the beautiful red lips, and the sweet passion maddened him.

“Yes, I love you,” he whispered. “Junie darling, do you love me?”

She hid her face on his shoulder. She did not answer him; but he was content, for he knew little Junie loved him, even as he loved her.

The perfume of the flowers seemed to rise and infold them. It was the sweetest love poem in blissful reality that pen could ever portray.

“Now that I know that you love me, Junie, no one shall ever take you from me, darling,” he whispered, caressing her beautiful golden curls. “These hands that

have met and clasped, shall never be parted again. Our hearts have met—who has the power to sever them? No other man must dare kiss the sweet lips I have kissed. You are mine, Junie, my beautiful love, my precious one. I am going away from Tanglewood this very night—within an hour—and you must go with me, my darling, as my own precious little wife. Nothing on earth must separate us, my darling.”

The very strength of his passionate love overwhelmed her. Could she give up this handsome, adoring young lover, whom she loved so well, and to-morrow wed the rich old squire? Youth always balances the question on the side of love, and handsome Harry Granger won the day; and when the midnight train steamed out of Tanglewood it carried with it Harry Granger and his beautiful little child-bride, Junie Dean no longer, but pretty little Junie Granger, whom the adoring young husband fairly worshiped.

When Squire Granger discovered Junie's flight, and her romantic midnight marriage with his nephew the next morning, his intense rage knew no bounds. He could not turn Farmer Dean from the farm, because he had canceled the mortgage, but he swore to be revenged on the clever lovers.

“Old heads are more tricky than young ones,” he muttered, savagely, and he would take a revenge so terrible upon them, they would curse each other—ay, rue the day that e'er they met, and that, too, before the first week of their honey-moon should pass, for

“Next to love, revenge is sweet.”

Ay, doubly sweet to the old lover who finds his love-dream rudely shattered by some handsome, dashing youth who finds more favor in his lady's eyes.

Squire Granger readily ascertained where the young couple had gone.

"To New York," the young ticket-agent who had sold them their tickets answered, when he was questioned, and the irate squire imagined the young ticket-agent was laughing at his discomfiture.

The next train bore Squire Granger to New York, but before starting, this following peculiar telegram was flashed over the wires addressed to Henry Granger, Astor House, New York City:

"Will meet you to-night at — Hotel. A startling proposition to make; consent and your fortune is made. You shall be my heir. Harry is in New York; keep out of his way until you see me—important.

"SAMUEL GRANGER."

Harmless as the telegram appeared to read, it would have been an index to a startling revelation if a careful mind-reader could have opened the book of Squire Granger's wicked heart just then and perused the dark, cruel plot woven upon its pages, a plot which was to wreck two human souls, and rend asunder two adoring hearts, for a happiness like theirs was too bright, too bewitching to last.

If such bewildering love-dreams could last, this earth would be a very heaven; but with every cup of joy there are drops of sorrow mingled, and if we would taste the joy, we must drain the sorrow mingled with the dregs.

"We shall see, my fine fellow, which of us will win in this interesting game of hearts," muttered the squire, as the train slowly puffed into the New York depot. "Bask in the smiles of your pretty bride to-day, but so help me Heaven, before the sun sets on the morrow your sunshine will set in the blackest gloom."

CHAPTER V.

In an exquisite little boudoir in one of the up-town hotels in New York sat Harry Granger and his beautiful little golden-haired child-wife.

His arms were clasped fondly around her slender waist, and her head rested on his shoulder.

"You shall never regret marrying me, my darling," he was saying. "I am young, and our future lies all before us. We will show my uncle that we can get along famously without his gold. There is nothing like having a little wife dependent upon a man to sharpen up his energies and make him ambitious," laughed Harry. "Why, I feel that I could go and do battle with the whole world, and win in the great struggle, for your sake, Junie, love. I have an appointment this morning," he added, carelessly, "but I will return before luncheon. You must not be lonely, darling; remember, every hour spent away from you seems an eternity, but this case is imperative. I must keep it a secret from you for a little while. 'What one does not know will not worry them,' " he quoted, with a gay laugh.

"How very cruel of you to keep a secret from me, Harry," cried Junie, nestling her golden head upon his shoulder. "I shall be very jealous of every thought I may not share—for they say there is always a woman connected with every secret," she added, shyly.

For answer the young husband stooped down and covered the pretty rosy mouth with kisses, clasping her so tightly in his arms against his beating heart that she cried out for mercy.

That was their parting. The next moment he was gone, and pretty little Junie, the bride of a few short hours, was left alone in the beautiful little blue-and-gold boudoir, with her rosy, girlish day-dreams for companions.

"Oh, how funny it seems to be really married!" cried Junie, laughing and sobbing in one breath. "A few short weeks ago, only a few short weeks ago, I was a dreaming child by the brook-side, romantically wondering how and where I should meet my fate—and now I am somebody's wife! My love! my love!" she murmured, nestling down

into the easy-chair her handsome, boyish young husband had so lately occupied, and pressing her rosy, blushing cheeks against the soft blue plush cushions, "how happy I am; no one in the world is so happy as I. I wonder what poor Papa Dean and mamma thought when they heard of my marriage," she mused. "Will they censure me for choosing youth and love in preference to age and riches? They would be sure to forgive Harry and me, if they knew how we loved each other," she thought. "After Harry gets a situation somewhere, I will write to them."

She was sure of the forgiveness of good old Farmer Dean and his wife, but she was not so sure of her sister Fanny.

"Fanny will never forgive me," she thought; "for she had set her heart upon winning my handsome young husband, even before she saw him; but he could never have married her, for Heaven intended him for me. How kind Heaven has been to me, for we love each other so!"

She drew her cushioned chair close up to the open window, and drawing aside the white lace curtains, she pressed her cheeks into her little pink palms, watching, with all the artless delight of the simple country lassie that she was, the throngs of pedestrians, like a human sea surging restlessly to and fro, and wondering where in the world so many people could be going.

The silvery chimes of a pretty, fancy clock on the marble mantel chimed the hour of noon.

"I wonder what in the world keeps Harry?" she mused. "I—"

She never finished the sentence. Something white caught her eye lying on the lilies of the sky-blue velvet carpet.

"It is a letter," she exclaimed, rising from her chair and tripping lightly across the room toward where it lay. "Harry must have dropped it."

It was a delicate, pink-tinted affair, with a monogram of fanciful design upon one side. The other side bore the address: "Harry Granger, Grand Central Hotel, City," and the writing was fine and delicate as though a lady's hand had penned it.

"I do not think Harry would care if I were to read it," she told herself, taking it over to the window and seating herself again.

The dancing sunbeams drifted in through the open windows upon Junie's beautiful golden head as she bent over the letter, pressing it lovingly to her lips because it bore her husband's name—that letter which was the beginning of the darkest tragedy pen could ever portray.

She drew the letter from the envelope with a pretty, caressing movement, and these were the words that she read:

"MY DEAR HARRY,—Come to me at once. You were too hasty. No one must come between us; our affection for each other is too deeply rooted for that."

"Yours, in great haste, Lou."

With a low, gasping cry like a sorely frightened, wounded bird, little Junie sunk back faint and trembling among the blue satin cushions, clutching the fatal letter in her hands.

"I am mad!" she cried to herself, "or my eyes deceive me! Surely Harry must have done this for a jest to test my love for him. No one has a right to call him dear Harry but me."

Yet, reason with herself as she would, every delicate line on the pink-tinted page seemed dancing before her eyes in letters of fire; and even the breeze stirring the lace curtains seemed to whisper mockingly the name of Lou. Was this the secret he was keeping from her?

She remembered now he had looked embarrassed when

she had said, laughingly, that people had said there was a woman connected with every secret.

He had said, too, that he must keep the appointment, and that he would surely return before luncheon, and the hour had passed long since.

Scarcely heeding what she did, she put on her sun-hat, and quite forgetting she was a stranger and quite unused to the streets of a city, Junie hurriedly left the hotel, mingling thoughtlessly with the eager, hurrying throng pressing rapidly to and fro.

As ill-luck or fortune or fate would have it, she had scarcely proceeded a dozen rods ere she saw a phaeton, drawn by two nettlesome ponies, rapidly approaching her. She took but a fleeting glimpse of the young lady reclining indolently among the cushions. A beautiful, fair-faced young girl, with brown, wavy hair, sparkling, hazel eyes, and a beautiful, curved, rosebud mouth, which gave a certain air of haughty pride to her finely cut face. She was elegantly dressed, and the diamonds she wore sparkled like brilliant suns at the tiny shell-shaped ears and about her graceful white throat.

Little Junie's glance lingered but for a moment on her cold, proud face, then turned like one fascinated to the gentleman beside her.

Every drop of blood seemed suddenly to leave little Junie's heart. The very air seemed to stifle her and the light of the sweet June sunshine to grow dark around her. The gentleman sitting beside the proud-faced young girl was Harry Granger, her husband.

His dark, handsome face was bent eagerly toward his companion with that rapt look of love and adoration in his passionate, eloquent eyes that made poor little Junie almost faint to witness it lavished upon another.

A lady and gentleman walking directly in front of her were evidently admiring and discussing the handsome couple in the pretty phaeton which had just passed.

"A remarkably handsome couple," she heard the gentleman remark, and in answer to the lady's questions, if he knew them, he replied: "There are very few New Yorkers who do not. She is Miss Melrose, Banker Melrose's daughter, of Wall Street, and her companion is a Mr. Granger, a reckless, handsome young fellow, who lost all chance of becoming the heir of a wealthy uncle down in Kentucky by some romantic nonsense he had been indulging in. 'All's well that ends well,' however, for I had it from his own lips, not over an hour ago. The rumor floating about is perfectly true—he is soon to marry pretty Miss Melrose, the banker's heiress."

CHAPTER VI.

WITH an elastic, buoyant step Harry Granger left his pretty golden-haired little bride that sunny June morning, little dreaming under what pitiful circumstances he should look upon her face again.

Little cared the handsome, boyish young husband for the princely fortune he had just lost. He told himself, gayly, one glance from Junie's bright eyes was worth a thousand such fortunes, and he felt as rich as a king on his throne, in the knowledge that little Junie belonged to him.

So engrossed was Harry with his own thoughts, as he walked briskly along, he did not see the two men behind him dogging his footsteps as stealthily as a shadow.

He proceeded at once to one of the principal hotels, inquiring of the clerk if a gentleman named Arnold—Louis Arnold—was stopping there.

Yes, Mr. Arnold had been stopping there, but was not there at present. Word had been left with the clerk, if Mr. Granger called, please ask him to come down to the wharf at once; he could find his friend on board of the

"Alaska;" he must come at once, if he would see him; the vessel sailed for London, England, that forenoon.

Hastily thanking the clerk, without the least thought of the terrible consequences which would accrue from it, Harry hailed a passing coupé, and ten minutes later was boarding the "Alaska."

A handsome, slender, delicate youth of some two-and-twenty advanced, hurriedly, to greet him.

"I read of your arrival at the Grand Central," he said, "and I could not leave for Europe without seeing you. Although we were a little on the outs when we last parted, I knew you wouldn't hold resentment against your old college chum, Harry, my boy. We have been too fast friends for that. Besides, I have a proposal to make you which is a sure road to a fortune. Come to my state-room, and I'll explain this glorious golden opening to you, 'which, if taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;' the cabin's too crowded."

Scarcely waiting for Harry to get in a word edgewise, the impulsive youth eagerly led the way, Harry Granger following.

The young husband smiled amusedly to himself, picturing how amazed his college chum would be when he told him of the exquisite little golden-haired bride who awaited his coming back at the hotel; and if there were any golden opening for making a fortune, luck must have sought him out in the very nick of time; he had never had so much need of it in all his life before. How pleased Junie would be—his precious, loving little Junie—when he went back to her and told her there would be no need of seeking a situation now that Dame Fortune had smiled upon him!

The moments flew by on rapid wings. So engrossed was Harry in the brilliant, dazzling plan they were discussing, he did not notice the huge vessel slowly move from its moorings, and as they talked the "Alaska" moved steadily out to sea, bearing with her the hapless young husband,

torn thus rudely from the clinging clasp of his pretty child-bride, who was dearer to him than life itself.

Majestically the steamer sailed down the bay, and, ere the sun had crossed the meridian, New York, with its smoke and towering steeples, was lost to sight in the distance.

To describe the overwhelming horror and despair that seized poor Harry when the truth of the situation burst upon him can better be imagined than described. The poor young husband was like one mad. He leaped to the deck like one distracted, and would have flung himself over into the cruel, pitiless waves that every moment were separating him further and further from his darling little bride who awaited him but strong hands held him back.

Even the captain—stern, sea-faring man though he was—as well as the sympathetic passengers, was moved to tears when the agonizing story of the young husband fell from his lips, as he turned his handsome, pale face toward them, begging them not to hold him back.

“If I give myself up to the waves some returning vessel will pick me up,” he cried, pushing the damp, dark, clinging curls from his brow.

The captain would not listen to it. Of course the vessel could not return, even if it were a matter of life and death; but he did promise to stop the vessel and send the distracted young husband back on the first steamer bound for New York that they came across, and a steamer was liable to come within hailing distance at any moment.

With a bitter groan, such as is wrung from the heart by the keenest anguish, Harry flung himself down upon a seat on the deck, refusing to be comforted.

Ladies gathered around him and wept for the handsome, boyish young husband so cruelly separated from his beautiful, golden-haired bride of a few short hours, and gentlemen pressed his hand silently, in token of sympathy

which men understand so well—a sympathy too heartfelt and eloquent to be expressed by words.

His chum, Louis Arnold, felt almost as deeply grieved as the young husband himself. He never dreamed that Harry was married; he had not told him; and they were so eagerly discussing a great speculation open to them that both had failed to notice the vessel was under way.

There was no help for it but to watch and wait for the next in-coming steamer, and, with a heart as heavy as lead, Harry Granger watched, with a white, set, despairing face, the sun sink low behind the waste of water, and the gloaming creep over those wild, dashing waves that heralded the approach of the on-coming night, murmuring, brokenly, as he bowed his dark curls on his hands:

“Junie, my precious love! oh, my darling! my darling!”

If Harry Granger could have known and witnessed the terrible scene through which his cherished little Junie was passing at that very moment, it would have driven him to the verge of madness. It was well he did not know the peril which at that moment beset his innocent little child bride.

* * * * *

The two men who had followed Harry Granger down to the wharf stood facing each other in dismay as the “Alaska” slowly steamed down the bay with the young husband on board.

By the keen intuition that usually comes to the brain of quick-witted rogues, the elder man, who was no less a person than Squire Granger himself, jumped at the exact truth of the affair at once. By some lucky fate the young husband, by his own carelessness, had been carried off to sea, and Junie, whom he had sworn to be revenged upon for choosing his handsome nephew instead of himself, with his teeming acres and heavy bank account—Junie was

alone, unused to the ways of city life, unprotected, and at his mercy.

One glance at his companion, with his handsome, dark, flashing eyes, dark, waving hair, and graceful form, and the imaginative reader guesses the truth at once. He is Henry Granger, the false-hearted, cruel twin brother of our unhappy hero.

Even those who knew them best could scarcely tell them apart—in face, form, and voice, the exact counterpart of each other, but in heart and disposition as widely different as the fair, smiling heaven above from the dark, sin-shrouded earth beneath.

Harry Granger had been the one best loved; even Squire Granger had loved him best, and determined to make him his heir.

And despite Harry's oft-repeated protestations that if the money were left to him it should be equally divided between himself and his twin brother, dark, bitter thoughts rankled in Henry Granger's heart, as he muttered, meaningly, to himself:

"If he were dead, I would be my uncle's heir and inherit all—yes, all."

For several moments these two, uncle and nephew, stood facing each other.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the squire, catching his breath hard, a lurid lightning gleaming in his evil eyes. "This is a thousand times better than the plan we had mapped out, Henry, my boy; this will be plainer sailing than I even hoped for. Follow out my plan as I shall map it out, and you shall be my heir, but betray me, and I shall—" he leaned over and whispered the next few words distinctly and with fearful emphasis in Henry's ear. They were but a few words, but so startling that the desperate, reckless young man turned pale to the very lips. He knew he was in his uncle's power in more ways than one, and a guilty conscience blanched his handsome face with a deadly fear.

"I bear him no love," replied Henry Granger, with a forced, hard laugh. "I will follow out your instructions to the very letter. I think I understand perfectly what you wish me to do."

"No one but yourself could answer my purpose," replied the squire, deliberately. "You are Harry's twin brother. The deuce himself could not tell you two apart. Ten chances to one Harry has not mentioned you to his pretty bride. These young married folks, with their billing and cooing, can't find anything to talk about but love. You must take your brother Harry's place."

As desperate a villain as Henry Granger was, he started abruptly back with a cry of horror and astonishment.

"You are anticipating my meaning too soon," said the old man, grimly. "Do you suppose I am such a fool as to have the young girl I want myself falling in love with you, too? No, sir, not a bit of it. Make love to her at your peril. That is not in the bargain."

CHAPTER VII.

WITHOUT pausing to hear another word, little Junie turned, like one who had been dealt a sudden death-blow, and hurried back to the pretty little blue-and-gold boudoir, which she had left but a few short moments before a happy, loving child—now a terrible weight of anguish crushed her that almost broke her heart.

One picture rose before her eyes, blotting out the sunshine—her handsome young husband bending so lovingly over the beautiful young girl in the phaeton.

And the words she had heard rang in her ears like a death-knell:

"I had it from his own lips; he is soon to marry pretty Miss Melrose, the banker's heiress."

For one moment Junie sobbed as though her heart

would break. Then she dashed the pearly tear-drops from her blue eyes, and laughed aloud.

"Why, how silly I am!" she cried, putting her long, shining hair back from her flushed face. "For one little minute I almost believed it. Why, he could not marry her, for he is married to me."

No one else could claim him; no other woman had a right to her handsome Harry's caresses or his love, for he was her husband.

"My marriage was so sudden and unexpected, perhaps people did not know of it," she told herself. "It must be stopped, though, this cruel report, which is so doubly cruel to me, his wife."

Yet the thought of her young husband bending so tenderly over another, and neglecting the young wife who awaited his coming, troubled her sorely. Was he sorry he had married her, poor, simple Junie Dean, a farmer's daughter, when he might have wedded this cold, proud beauty, this banker's daughter, with whom gossips connected his name?

Poor innocent little Junie loved her young husband with such a tender, yearning, clinging, passionate love, the very thought of such a possibility almost broke her heart.

She would ask him to tell her about this beautiful girl, whom she determined should know at once she had no right to her Harry's attentions, for he was married.

She saw the door swing noiselessly back on its hinges. A tall, graceful form stood on the threshold. One glance at the dark, handsome face, and, with the prettiest little cry that ever issued from crimson lips, Junie sprang into his outstretched arms, sobbing, pantingly:

"Oh, Harry, Harry darling—my love, my love! I was sorely afraid I had lost you forever."

As the clever reader has probably already imagined, the stranger on the threshold was not the young husband, but the cruelly false twin brother.

Junie's reception of him left no doubt in his wicked heart but that the plan so deeply laid could be executed without the least difficulty. He saw that Junie believed him her husband. One bold stroke, and he would be heir to one of the most princely fortunes in Kentucky.

In his own mind he had pictured Junie as a fair-faced little country lassie, but the rare, exquisite beauty of the golden-haired little bride who had sprung so joyously into his arms almost took his breath away in sheer surprise.

No wonder Harry's heart had been captured. He did not wonder at it. He could readily understand how men could be willing to barter a thousand fortunes to gain the love of such a glorious little creature as this. His heart thrilled under her fairy touch, as it had never thrilled before.

Hard-hearted as Henry Granger was, he almost cursed himself for the words he had come there to speak—words that would slay the sweetest little blossom that ever bloomed in life's garden; and he found himself bitterly envying his twin brother the love of this peerless little beauty.

For one brief moment the thought crossed his brain—how easy it would be to fly with her out of reach of his brother and uncle—fly with her to the other end of the earth.

The next instant he discarded the mad idea. He had seen too much of the world to pay such a heavy ransom for love. No, no, better carry out the plan his uncle had laid out, which would insure him not only his uncle's fortune, but would also be the stepping-stone to securing the banker's daughter, and thus a double fortune would await him.

He would steel his heart against this bewitching pretty child-bride. She was his brother's bride—that fact alone made her sacred, villain though he was—and he admitted to himself he must break away at the earliest possible moment, lest he fall desperately in love with her himself.

Every touch of those pretty little snow-flake hands, every caress and glance of those starry eyes seemed to magnetize him.

It was actually a hardship to resist making love to her, and returning those delicious thrilling kisses a thousand-fold.

She was just such a little creature as men recklessly break every tie to win.

As he gazed into Junie's face, he did not wonder at what had happened for her sake; and he compared her to the irresistible Helen of Troy, for whose dangerous smile brave men laid down their very lives.

"Oh, Harry, my love!" she cried, nestling closer in his embrace, "if you had known how wretched your little Junie was you could not have stayed away so long. Why did you not come back to luncheon, as you promised. Harry?"

"I was unexpectedly detained. I called to see a man on business, and I couldn't get away," he said, with a forced smile.

In spite of his great efforts to appear calm, his arm trembled around her, and his bold, dark eyes fell guiltily before Junie's clear, truthful, searching glance.

"You told me where you were going must remain a secret for the present, and I told you then there was always a woman connected with a secret—"

"You see you were mistaken," he interrupted. "You are jealous, Junie. There was no woman connected with this affair this morning. What man could look at any other woman after basking in the light of your blue eyes?"

As he spoke he bent forward to kiss the pretty, quivering lips so dangerously near his own, that he recklessly threw prudence to the winds.

But little Junie sprung from his arms with a passionate cry, her bright eyes flashing like stars, and her pretty face white as the fleecy dress she wore.

"There was a woman in it, Harry," she cried, "for I saw her; and I know, too, what they say about you, 'That you will marry her soon.' I saw you riding with her, but a few short moments ago, and I wonder that I did not cry out to you, 'You are my husband!'"

"Where were you when you saw this, and how much do you know?" cried Henry Granger, starting abruptly to his feet, for he had imagined he had managed this affair quite cleverly.

He had met Miss Melrose, pretty Louisa Melrose, the banker's daughter, out for a drive and had accompanied her for a few blocks, taking good care to leave the phaeton and the charming heiress fully a block from the hotel where Junie was stopping, and to which at that moment he was on his way.

How could she have seen him, and what was it that she knew?

"I was tired of waiting for you to come back, and I went out to meet you," she sobbed, pantingly. "Then I saw you riding past with that pretty lady, and the people who passed me on the street said you were to marry her soon, and they called her an heiress and a banker's daughter—Miss Melrose. Tell me that you will stop these cruel stories. You must tell them, Harry, you could not marry her, for you are married already!" she cried out, piteously, standing before him and holding out her little tiny white hands flutteringly toward him.

Henry Granger started from the divan where he had been seated, pale to the very lips.

Heavens! he had not anticipated this. What if she should make a scene? Detection would surely follow; and if it once reached the ears of the banker's daughter, all hopes in that quarter would be dashed in an instant.

"I shall go direct to Miss Melrose myself, and tell her that I am your wife, and that she must not ride with you again," declared Junie, spiritedly.

"You are making a mountain out of a mole-hill, Junie," he said. "Even if a man is married, it does not follow that he must be less courteous and polite to other ladies, so long as he doesn't make love to them."

"But married men do not ride out with other ladies," persisted Junie.

"I can not understand why women make such a fuss over such a trifling event," he replied, coolly. "Supposing they do circulate the story that I am to marry Miss Melrose, you shouldn't listen to such nonsense."

"You do not seem to remember it is a matter of life or death to me, Harry!" she cried, piteously. "How dare they circulate this story that you are to marry another woman?" The sweet voice thrilled with pain, but did not falter; the beautiful face flushed with fire and indignation. "Why do they connect her name with yours, Harry?" she cried. "You must stop it, or I shall go to her and assert my rights as your wife."

The critical moment had come. It had come about in an entirely different way from what he had intended. Here was the very opening for what he had come to say to her. Hard-hearted though he was, he almost shrunk from the next words, which were to be her death-blow. Yet the thought of the double fortune which awaited him nerved him for the task before him.

He strode several times rapidly across the room, then suddenly stopped short, crossing his arms carelessly over his breast as he leaned against a marble Flora, standing before her, cold and pitiless, in the flickering June sunshine.

Often, at the most critical moments of our lives, our eyes have wandered irresistibly to some object that has stamped itself indelibly on our brain forever as connected with that scene; and as he stood there before her, scornfully, cruelly handsome, she noticed, what she had never seen before, upon his right temple, almost hidden by his

dark, curling hair, a small red, irregular scar—a scar quite the shape of a crescent—a scar which the keen, searching eyes of love had never discovered on that blue-veined temple before.

She almost believed she should wake up and find all this a horrible dream.

“What had changed the adoring young husband of a few short hours?” she asked herself, in puzzled bewilderment.

“You force me to tell that which is more bitter than death to tell you!” he cried, flushing and turning pale by turns, “and I loathe myself for the words forced from my lips. As I speak them, I own that I am the greatest villain under the sun. I can not correct the report you have heard about my approaching marriage with Louisa Melrose, for it is perfectly true, and she is soon to become—what you are not—my wife!” The words seemed to fall, in the silence, like the hiss of red-hot tongues. Junie stood before him so still and so white, he wondered if she had comprehended the import of his words, and he repeated: “I am sorry you have forced the words from me, but you are not my wife, little Junie! I am perfectly free to marry whom I will!”

With a low, despairing cry, that God in heaven and the angels must have heard and wept over, poor little Junie, the beautiful, miserable child-bride of a few short hours sunk helplessly down at the villain's feet, crying out that those cruel words had killed her.

CHAPTER VIII.

LITTLE Junie fell at his feet like a poor little frightened bird struck down in all the glow of its youth by the cruel sportsman's rifle. She shuddered as one seized by a mortal chill.

“Oh, Harry, my darling, it is cruel of you to say such

things to frighten me! How foolish I am! For one half minute I quite believed you, and the torture of it nearly killed me."

"You must believe me, Junie; it is quite true," he replied. "You would know the truth sooner or later. It is best for your sake that you break with me now. I feel in my heart that I love you—love you as I shall never love another; but I swear to you that you are not my wife!"

The beautiful eyes opened wide, with a look of horror in their depths he never forgot to his dying day; the white lips parted, but no sound issued from them.

"Oh, my love, you should not try to frighten me so!" she gasped, clinging to him like a drowning child. "I should fall down dead at your feet, my love, if I believed what you said was true!"

Whiter still grew the beautiful young face, half hid by her sweeping golden hair. All the bright color had faded from the ripe, crimson lips; her eyes were burning like glowing purple fires, with the great shadow of fear mirrored in their depths.

"Harry, my love! my love!" she sobbed, kneeling at his feet; "oh, my darling! what has changed you so since you parted from me, clasping me to your heart, and calling me your little wife? Some terrible change has come over you. I—I—am half afraid of you. You must not try to frighten me, darling, for you know I am your wife before God and man! Tell me, my love! my husband! that it was only a jest you uttered to test my love for you! Don't you know you are mocking Heaven, Harry, when you say such terrible things?"

"It is too true!" he cried. "You are not my wife."

"But you married me!" she gasped.

Then, for the first time, the depths of this villainy, which compelled him to utter what he knew to be utterly false, broke from his lips, as he replied, hoarsely:

"The marriage was—a mockery. How could you be

my wife when the minister who married us was no minister? The whole thing was a farce."

Her little hands fell from him—all the strength seemed to die from her. Poor Junie stood before him, white, silent, dumb, stricken into stone, mute with the depths of her own misery, surely the saddest and most piteous sight ever seen.

He never forgot the bitter cry that fell from her lips as she raised her white arms toward heaven, crying out:

"Oh, God! what have I done that I should be so sorely tried? I have never done a single wrong in all my life but to love this man, who has slain me with his cruel words! And, oh, I love him so! oh, I love him so! I could have died for him! And when he clasped me in his arms and called me his wife, I wonder I did not die of joy, for I thought I had gained all heaven in his love!"

Her passionate words died away in a low, bitter, heart-rending wail; passionate, burning tears rained down her white face, as, crouching on the velvet carpet, she lay like a crushed, beautiful flower at his feet, sobbing her heart out in such pitiful, wailing moans that he thought she would go mad then and there at his feet.

"I am sorry for my share in this," he cried, flushing with a burning shame at his own unmanliness in striking so terrible a blow at this beautiful young creature's heart. But the rest of this affair must be gone through with somehow, lest he repent and confess the whole truth to her—that he was not her young husband, but his traitorously false twin brother, and that her handsome, adoring young husband had been carried off to sea by a strange freak of unexplainable fate.

He crushed back the words that sprung to his lips as he unclasped her agonized, clinging white arms.

"I will not leave you unprovided for, Junie," he said, drawing a well-filled purse from his breast-pocket. "I would advise you to take this money and go back to Tan-

glewood at once, and if—after a little—if you could look more kindly on the squire, I would advise you to marry him.”

But the still, white face, buried in the lilies on the velvet carpet, or the golden head, showed no signs of having heard the deep insult he had added to the unparalleled injury he had done her.

The pulse of life had momentarily stopped, and Junie, the most pitiful and miserable little bride that ever the sun shone upon, lay in a dead faint at his feet.

It would have been better for her if he had plunged a dagger into her white breast then and there, and her life would have ended—that life which was to have such a thrilling sequel, stranger than any fiction.

She was so young, and life held for her the bitterest woe that ever darkened a young girl's life. Oh, the pity of it, that God did not let her die then and there!

Heartily detesting himself for his cowardly treachery, which had won him a fortune, Henry Granger turned on his heel and quitted the room.

The bright stars and the soft, pitying moonlight were stealing into the pretty blue-and-gold boudoir ere poor little Junie recovered from her deep, death-like swoon.

For a single instant the terrible past seemed like a hideous, confused dream which bound her senses in an icy grasp.

“Harry, my love, my husband, where are you?” she cried, tremulously. “I have had such horrid dreams and I am so frightened.”

No young husband clasped his arms about her and caressed and soothed her. She was alone—deserted and alone—in a strange place, among strangers, this poor little golden-haired child-bride who had never known one deep thought until her path had been crossed by love—love which brings with it either the sweetest joy that comes to the lives of mortals and makes a very paradise of earth, or

the deepest and most tragic woe that can blast a human heart.

Like a meteoric flash the events just narrated swept across her dazed, bewildered brain.

She did not cry out or utter any moan. The terrible sorrow that had so nearly dethroned her reason had spent itself in his presence, the man who had brought her away from her childhood's home, where she had been as happy and as free from care as the song-birds on the apple-boughs in the orchard, or the wild flowers that nodded in the sunshine on the banks of the purling brook.

Yet the poor little child-bride uttered no curses against him. She looked up at the stars, and her white lips uttered only the one thought:

"Oh, Harry, my love, the love of my life, I loved you so! Heaven help me, I love him so madly still!"

She tottered to her feet, leaning against the marble center-table for support. She put out her little hands gropingly, and they came in contact with the purse he had placed there.

Junie recoiled as though a serpent had stung her.

"I shall never touch a penny of his money, though I was starving!" she cried. "His money would burn my fingers!"

She would leave it on the table for them to do what they would with it, and she would lay her pretty marriage ring, with its soft, bright shining stone beside it, which bore their names entwined in a true-love knot, "Junie and Harry"—the marriage ring in which she had taken such girlish pride, the ring which was such a mockery, and which she had no right to wear.

Junie was so young, so inexperienced in the ways of the great cruel world, and so unused to city life, she did not know which way to turn.

Her bright young life had been spent in a rosy dream, laying her curly head on the green grass by the brook-side,

as she watched the birds and the butterflies, weaving daisy-chains and searching for four-leaved clovers.

Now that the great care of her dark future was thrust so suddenly upon her, she was like an infant torn from its mother's breast and thrust out upon the cold mercies of the pitiless world, to battle for herself in the great fierce struggle of life as best she could.

"By this time to-morrow night," she told herself, "the whole world will hear of what has happened to me." She never dreamed in her innocent little heart such a deep disgrace had ever come to the life of a girl before. How was she to face the shame and the terrible disgrace? It would break her poor old father's heart, and her gentle, patient mother's, when they heard of the disgrace that had fallen upon their tender little Junie, the child they had loved so well.

Would Fanny pity her, or would she say that it was just retribution for stealing away Squire Granger's heir from her?

She could not go home. Fanny would spurn her, and turn her from the door. She had nowhere—nowhere in all the wide, wide world to go, yet she must not stay there.

The hour was late, yet throngs of people hurried along the brilliantly lighted streets, jostling the beautiful, forlorn little creature, carrying her along with the crowd, as a leaflet is carried along by a swift current, without will-power of its own to choose its own course.

Without a thought of where she was going, Junie threaded one street after another—anywhere—anywhere out of the strange noise and bustle—to find some quiet place to die.

She was in one of the finest portions of the great metropolis—Lexington Avenue—but one street was the same as another to poor little Junie, the miserable, abandoned child of misfortune.

At last from sheer exhaustion she sunk down on the cold

white marble steps of a palatial residence; and the flickering gas fell upon the silver door-plate, and with a strange thrill she read the name upon it—A. Melrose.

As Junie gazed bitterly at the costly, magnificent mansion that held her rival, the door was opened by a liveried servant, and the tall, graceful form of her husband stepped out, and Junie caught a glimpse within the roselit entrance hall of Louisa Melrose, resplendent in soft, shimmering silk and blazing diamonds, the beautiful girl whom Harry was to wed.

The softened, pearly light of the chandelier fell upon his darkly handsome, smiling face, and standing out there in the cold, dark shadows, she heard him say:

“Good-night, Louisa, my darling.”

His voice made the warm blood in her veins freeze and stand still, her heart seemed almost to stop its beating, and great drops of anguish coursed down her beautiful, snow-white cheeks. She fell upon her knees, in the shadow of the gas-lamp, and clutched her hands tightly over her breaking heart, as she listened to the voice of him whom she believed to be her faithless Harry, whom she loved to madness still—the voice that had wooed her in such subtle, honeyed accents, down by the brook-side—the voice that had opened all paradise to her, that had whispered to her of love until her senses reeled in the sweetest ecstasy, that had lured her from her home, and then cast her adrift on the cold mercies of the pitiless world, to die, or to live, with a broken heart, as best she might.

In the agony and bitterness of her heart, she wondered how God could let a man who had done such a cruel deed still walk the smiling earth and be happy.

Here he was, the gayest of the gay, smiling upon another, as though he had not that very day broken the sweetest faith and truest heart that ever beat. No regret, ~~so remorse~~ weighed on him, no shadow of sorrow; and, as

she saw that, a bitter longing for vengeance crept over her. "Before God," she cried, in low, passionate anguish, "I swear that I will be revenged! I will make it the one aim of my life to win back my love. She shall never be his wife!"

She raised her desperate white face up to the starry sky, then, without a moan or a cry, she shrunk back closer into the dense shadow, as Henry Granger, the false twin brother, ran lightly down the marble steps toward the very spot where Junie stood.

CHAPTER IX.

JUNIE shrunk still further in the dark, grim shadows, until the tall, graceful form had quite vanished from sight—even the echo of his springy step was lost in the distance.

"I was mad to love him so!" she cried, bitterly.

She remembered the story of the daisy she had read of in her childhood—the daisy that had dared look up to the sun—and that same sun had scorched it until it withered on the stem. Its sweet life had paid the price of its presumptuous folly.

"I am like that daisy," she told herself. "I, a simple, plain little farmer's daughter, was mad to dream that one so gifted, so far above me, could stoop to love me."

With the strange, unaccountable intuition that sometimes comes to women, little Junie loved best to think of Harry Granger as he parted from her, with kisses on his lips and the love-light in the splendid dark eyes that eventful June morning, and not as she had seen him last—hard, cold, and cruel—when he had spoken the words that had crushed out at one cruel blow all the brightness and sunshine from her young life.

Little Junie had read but little, and was as ignorant of the ways of the world as a child. She little knew that the

fate which seemed so horrible to her had overtaken more than one poor girl in the great city.

Junie told herself that the terrible disgrace which had fallen upon her must surely be written on her face, and on the morrow people would point her out—this little country lassie who had believed, Heaven help her! so trustfully in the love of the handsome young man who was to marry the banker's daughter, and though she believes him false she loves him still.

“The sweetest joy, the wildest woe, is love;
The taint of earth, the odor of the skies is in it.”

For an hour or more little Junie stands there in the shadow, gazing bitterly up at the magnificent home of the banker.

“She could never love him as I do,” she murmured, with a little choking sob. “The world is wide—she is rich and beautiful, and can choose where she will. Why, then, must she rob me of my love, when he is all the world to me?”

The moon is smiling in its grandeur overhead; below, the world is white with its glory.

It is past midnight, and the stars begin to pale. Already the “world's heart” begins to throb.

If it were not for the mantle of darkness that overspreads the earth, night would not be distinguishable from day in the busy streets of New York, where ceaseless throngs are ever surging to and fro, like the restless waves that lave its shore.

Pushing onward with the crowd, little Junie left the aristocratic portion of the city behind her, heeding not whither she went.

Morning broke, cold and gray, over the tall steeples, and the pulse of the great city throbbed faster and faster.

Then, for the first time, Junie woke up to a sense of her utter desolation. She felt faint, hungry, and weary. She

was penniless, and food and shelter cost money, and the craving for food was not to be stifled. Yet, in her hour of sorest need she felt glad that she had not taken one penny from the purse her cruel lover had tossed so carelessly upon the table as full recompense for her broken heart.

There was but one resort left: she must part with the locket she wore, which contained her father's and her mother's picture, or starve.

With faltering, hesitating step, Junie stopped before a large jewelry store, and gazed wistfully and timidly in.

"What can we do for you, my dear?" asked one of the clerks, peering impertinently into the flushed, beautiful face. "We seldom have such pretty customers so early in the morning."

The words died on little Junie's quivering, crimson lips in an indignant cry at the rascal's uncalled-for familiarity.

"He has heard all about it," thought the innocent child, bursting into tears, and without replying Junie clutched her treasure closer in her trembling hand and fled precipitately from the store.

She fled rapidly down the street, but flying steps pursued her, and in another instant the insolent young jewelry clerk was by her side.

"I say," he called out, breathlessly, "I did not mean to hurt your feelings, little one. You ought not to be so timid. By Jove, you'd be the prettiest little angel in New York, if you weren't so deuced shy!"

As he spoke, he tried to draw her hand within his arm; but she wrenched it away, the very picture of insulted pride, her pale face flushing a vivid scarlet, and her blue velvet eyes flashing luridly.

"Do not speak another word to me, sir," she panted, "or I shall cry out right here upon the street, and surely some one will come to save me from your insulting remarks."

"You dare not, little Puritan," cried the thoroughly

enraged clerk. "Some one might ask you whence you came, or where you were going so early in the morning, and they might ask you, too, how that dew came upon those golden tresses. Could you explain it satisfactorily?" he whispered, sneering meaningly in her face. "Think well of these things before you call a crowd to protect such beautiful innocence."

Almost fainting with mortification and bitter indignation, Junie fled from her persecutor as fast as her trembling limbs could carry her, and she heard, too, the threatening words he hissed in her ears:

"I shall pay you back for all this, my pretty one. New York is not so large but what I can find you; and when I do find you, I'll make you pay dearly for throwing me over like this; revenge is sweet. Adieu until we meet again, my pretty birdling."

Junie had fled many blocks before she dared take a glance behind her; her persecutor was not in sight, and standing before one of the handsome show-windows, the blinding tears coursed rapidly down her pretty cheeks.

She must try another jewelry store or starve. Here the clerk pitied her. She was evidently young and quite unused to city life, he perceived.

In a few broken words Junie stated her errand.

"We do not transact business of that kind here," he replied, gently. "You should go to a pawnbroker's shop for that. There are plenty of them hereabouts."

He saw the beautiful face grow deadly white with disappointment.

"How much do you want for the locket?" he asked. "Has it your portrait in it?"

"No," replied Junie, artlessly; "my father's and my mother's are in it. I wouldn't part with it for the whole wide world, but I need money this morning, oh, so much!"

"How much did you say you wanted?" asked the clerk.

wiping away a suspicious moisture from his kindly blue eyes.

"I wanted to get as much as a dollar if I could," Junie answered, blushing furiously, and stammering piteously.

"I will let you have it personally," said the clerk.

"Never mind leaving the locket. You may leave your address instead. And you can have your own time in re-mitting it. I'm in no hurry."

He handed her a dollar as he spoke, refusing to take the precious locket.

"I haven't any address," said Junie, faintly. "I—I—am a stranger. I have just come to New York."

"Seeking for a situation, I suppose?" he said, pity-ingly.

"Yes, sir," replied Junie, with a little dry sob.

"Then I should advise you to buy a thick veil for your- self the first thing you did. I say it only in kindness. Beauty like yours is a dangerous and fatal gift. You will remember when you are older my words; they will come back to you many a time through life. I am a man my- self, and of the world, worldly, yet I would advise you to get a veil at once, to hide such a face as that from the gaze of men. A pretty face often brings misery when its owner is unprotected and innocent, as you appear to be."

He handed Junie a two-dollar bill instead of the one for which she had asked, and turned to another customer who stood in waiting, apparently absorbed in the columns of the morning paper he had just picked up, but, in reality, gazing with bold, admiring eyes at little Junie's beautiful, flower-like face, and drinking greedily in every word that passed between them in such a low under-tone.

"Cast adrift on the world, and by the eternal, as pretty as a picture!" was his mental comment.

Making some casual inquiry of the clerk, he turned and rapidly left the store, hurrying after the retreating little figure up the street. She had purchased the veil, and only

the long golden curls were visible, and the prettiest dimpled chin imaginable.

"I beg your pardon, miss," said the stranger, stepping up to her and respectfully lifting his hat. "I am in search of some trustworthy young lady to fill a position recently and unexpectedly vacated. Could you tell me if you know where I could find such a one?"

Poor little Junie stood dumb and transfixed with joy before him. Surely God had heard the prayer that had just went up to Heaven to direct her to some way by which she could earn her daily bread.

It never occurred to her guileless little heart to mistrust him. She implicitly believed God had sent him in answer to her prayer. That his transparent excuse for speaking with her was a cruelly trumped-up falsehood, she never once dreamed. She had not come to that knowledge of the world to know that men's lips often spoke one thing and their hearts another.

She never suspected there was anything unusual in this procedure, or that he would not have asked the same question of any one he chanced to meet.

Junie clasped her tiny white hands supplicatingly before her as she replied, with trembling eagerness, straight from the depths of her heart:

"I think God must have sent you to me, sir, for I was just praying Heaven to guide me to some such place as you speak of. I—I do not know very much, but I should try, oh, so hard, to please you, sir, if you would only intrust me with the position."

"What is your name?" he asked, abruptly.

"Junie Gra—Junie Dean," she answered, in a low, choking voice.

"Come with me, Junie," he said, in an oily, insinuating voice. "I can safely promise you you will suit admirably, and be wearing silks and diamonds a month from

Now. Follow me, little Junie; we have not far to go—
simply around the next corner.”

CHAPTER X.

JUNIE, like the artless little country lassie that she was, followed her companion, without the least thought of her danger, in the direction indicated.

On all sides of her she saw startling placards, “Beware of Pickpockets,” but in all the great city there was not one placard which warned innocents abroad to beware of strangers.

“I am so glad you happened to meet me, sir, instead of some one else,” said Junie, thankfully. “I was just looking for a nice situation. I am a stranger in New York.”

“Any one could readily see that,” answered the dark-eyed stranger, with a rude, chuckling laugh that made innocent, timid little Junie glance up at him in startled wonder.

“There was a laughing devil in his sneer,
That raised emotions of both love and fear;
And where his scowl of hatred darkly fell,
Hope withering fled, and Mercy sighed farewell

He stopped before one of the leading theaters, where the flaming posters at the door informed the public at large “The White Fawn,” a magnificent, bewildering spectacular play, was in progress.

“This is the place,” he said, motioning her to follow him toward the stage door, which was in the rear. “With a face and a form like yours,” he continued, eying the shrinking little figure before him with a keen, experienced eye, “you ought to make a grand success on the stage. For a young girl who likes life there is nothing like it. Do you think it would suit you?”

"I—I don't know," faltered Junie. "I—I have never been inside one before. I never knew what it was like."

"It is living in paradise," answered her companion—"that is, until the glamour wears off," he continued, with a dry, hard laugh.

"And then?" asked Junie, turning her innocent blue eyes upon him wonderingly.

"Why, then you learn where to draw the line between an angel's paradise and a fool's paradise," he replied, with a careless shrug of his broad shoulders.

As he spoke, he seated her in one of the orchestra chairs, just near enough for "distance to lend enchantment to the view," where all the effects of the dress-rehearsal which was in progress were observable to the best advantage.

"Keep your seat and watch the rehearsal carefully, while I go and see the manager about you. I have influence with the manager," he said, nodding familiarly to her. "I won't be long."

Left to herself, Junie turned her eyes to the glittering stage just as the orchestra struck up a bewildering crash of music, and the transformation scene before her astonished gaze commenced. What she had imagined were roses slowly opened, and from the very hearts of the flowers a fairy sprung, resplendent in rose-colored tarlatan, spangles, and silvery wings, and golden slippers.

Poor little Junie fairly held her breath in rapturous ecstasy, half believing she was in a dream.

She forgot the terrible sorrow that had come to her. She forgot the handsome young lover who had wooed her down by the brook-side—had married her and brought her away from her happy country home, only to forsake her in the great wicked city, coolly avowing that the marriage was a mockery.

When hearts are young they are impressed by every passing cloud or dancing sunbeam. What wonder, then,

that the pretty little forlorn child of nature forgot everything in the bewildering maze of fairy life opened out before her astonished gaze?

She remembered once having seen a picture something like it—of just such a fairy group, in a leafy bower, with the suspicion of short, floating skirts and gracefully turned ankles. And she remembered, too, how angry her father, poor old Farmer Dean, had been at her childish admiration of it, and how he had brushed all the mystical poetry from the scene by exclaiming, angrily: "To my mind's eye, those young women in the picture would have looked a mighty sight more sensible with modest gowns on 'em; adown to their shoe-tops, a-milkin' the cows or churnin' butter like other womenfolk."

Junie had never forgotten the picture. This, then, was the reality. She was too bewildered to think, drinking in the intoxicating music and the varying scene before her with all of a child's undisguised delight.

Suddenly she became aware that one of the pretty creatures was gazing at her intently, and as soon as the scene was at an end one of the fairy ballet-dancers, with an utter contempt of intervening foot-lights and orchestra chairs, sprang lightly over them, and had advanced, with flaming, angry eyes, to where Junie sat.

She stopped directly in front of Junie, so near that her hot, flurried breath almost scorched the young girl's cheek.

"Who are you," she demanded, in a voice hoarse with concentrated rage, "that you dare come here with him? I will be frank with you," continued the dancer, with energetic bitterness, "that you may know on what grounds we stand. I see how it is. You are young, and your pretty face has attracted my lover, and he dares bring you here—here, where I am, coolly defying me!"

"Please do not be angry with me," cried Junie, pitifully. "I do not want him for a lover—indeed, I do not.

"I—I was looking for a situation, and he brought me here. I never saw him before I met him a few minutes ago."

Something in Junie's childish earnestness struck the dancer forcibly.

"We do not pick up our artists at random from the streets," she said, still eying the beautiful young face suspiciously. "It's the grandest mistake of a life-time these foolish, hot-headed, romantically silly young girls make, in believing they would succeed on the stage, when we, who have been brought up to it from babyhood, fail nine times out of ten."

"I—did not think of going on the stage," faltered Junie. "He proposed it to me and I—I—had nowhere else to go, and I thought Heaven was kind in showing me a way to make my own living so easily."

"Silly child!" cried the dancer, flinging herself down on one of the orchestra chairs beside her, and tapping with the heels of her golden slippers, as she nervously toyed with her diminutive fleecy skirts. "So easily," she repeated. "Why, it's the hardest life in the world! An outsider could never imagine it. All that glitters is not gold."

"I—I have read in books that it was very easy," said Junie, timidly.

"No doubt," remarked the dancer, grimly. "I have read such things, too, that's how I happen to be here myself. Heaven help me! and I say it is simply an outrage—a wretched folly—for writers to hold out such glowing lies for stage-struck, romantic young girls to dream over, until their silly heads are turned with the idea—an idea which proves a curse to them all their after-lives. You often read in romances of young girls whose beauty led them to the stage, and in no time they became queens before whom men bowed; but it is false, all false, I say, in real life. Beauty is only skin deep, and when the few short fleeting days of beauty are over, your usefulness is

over, and the public clamor for a younger, fairer face, and your vain ambition lies shattered at your feet, and you stand in the ruins of a wasted life."

"Some succeed—you did," faltered Junie, in pitiful uncertainty.

"Those few are to the manner born," replied the dancer, with peculiar emphasis. "You are not gay, coquettish, and brilliant, for our life. One must be all these to succeed. Have you a home and a mother?" she asked, quickly.

Junie thought of the quiet old farm, with its waving fields of golden wheat lying so peaceful at that moment in the sunshine, of her kind, gruff old father, and of her mother, so patient and so gentle, and she burst into tears.

"Forgive me," cried the impulsive little dancer, falling on her knees before the sobbing young girl. "I did not mean to grieve you. Any girl who weeps at the mention of her home and her mother is a good, honest girl. You look so young, so childish, so innocent, I pity you, if it is, as you say, you are alone, in a city like New York, seeking employment—if you have a home, take my honest advice—go back."

"I—I can not go back," sobbed Junie. "Something so terrible has happened to me that I dare not go back to the farm;" and in a few broken sobs, Junie poured out, gaspingly, the story of the cruel wrong that had been done her, in the ears of the little dancer, who knelt before her in the rose-colored skirts and spangled slippers.

"All such girls drift from bad to worse," muttered the little dancer, thoughtfully; but this pretty, timid little creature, with a face like a snow-flake, and eyes like two forget-me-nots, was too fair a flower for man to crush ruthlessly beneath his heel. "Yet, after such a bitter experience with a handsome young stranger, in the first place, you show that you are as innocent as a little baby by trusting the very next stranger that comes across your

path," she said, sharply, yet pityingly, brushing the tears from Junie's blue eyes.

"You must leave here at once," said the dancer, thoughtfully, "before he comes back; and, remember, I give you my very best advice when I say, flee from the man who brought you here as though he were accursed; he is not a man for you to know; his sins are many, and his virtues few. He will track you to the very ends of the world if he could but trace you. Remember, I warned you! Take this—you may need it," whispered the little dancer, pressing a full purse into Junie's hand; "and remember, if we do live an airy, gay life, the hearts of theatrical people always respond to the cry of distress, and we give our money as freely as water, or as the air we breathe. Go now," she said, fairly pushing little Junie out of the entrance, "and the only recompense I ask at your hands is that you always keep clear of Guy Forrester's path. I almost ask it as a prayer—for your sake, mind. And if you hear the world ever speak harshly of the frivolous, heartless Mademoiselle Lorena, I want you to remember me kindly, and at my best."

"I will," cried Junie, sobbing out her gratitude.

The dancer turned to the stage again as the music struck up in a swift, bewildering crash, and little Junie, frightened and considerably dazed, turned to the door just in time to meet Guy Forrester's dark, satanic face beaming upon her from the door-way, as he cried, roughly grasping her arm:

"Where now, my pretty one? Where are you going, I say?"

CHAPTER · XL

For one brief moment Junie's heart almost ceased beating as she glanced up into the bold, black eyes regarding her so intently.

"I—I have changed my mind," she said, desperately.
"I—don't want to go on the stage."

"Some one has been putting nonsense into your head," he exclaimed, grimly. "But I won't be trifled with in this way. I have set my heart upon having you in our company, and if you do not consent to go willingly, it will be much the worse for you."

"I am young, but I am no coward, sir!" retorted Junie, spiritedly. "You can not compel me to accept a situation I do not wish."

"Do not be too sure of that," replied Guy Forrester, meaningly. "More than one man has been known to resort to desperate measures, led on by a pretty face, such as yours, for instance."

"Sir," cried Junie, "how dare you speak so to me? Let go my arm instantly! I—I hate you! You are a bold, wicked man, to torture an unprotected girl like this!" she panted.

"Dear me!" cried Forrester, "what a little whirlwind! By George! now, whenever a man tells me women lose all their beauty when they are thoroughly angry, that man and I will have a subject to argue on worthy of the eloquence of a politician."

As he spoke, he stepped a pace or two backward, and, as fate or good luck would have it, in the backward movement his feet became entangled in the carpet, which had been accidentally loosened, and, with an exclamation more forcible than elegant, her vanquished foe fell backward a half dozen steps more.

With the swiftness of a bird who sees his cage door accidentally unbarred, Junie fairly flew over her prostrate persecutor, reaching the street panting with fear and excitement.

The thrilling event had, at least, taught her a severe lesson—to beware of strangers.

"There seem to be pitfalls on every side," she mur-

mured, drawing her thick veil closer over her tear-stained face.

Pretty young girls, glancing shyly up at their lovers, passed her by, and happy young brides, with their young husbands, whose every glance was a sweet caress.

"How can people smile, and the sun shine, and the gay throng move so hurriedly on, while one heart in their midst is breaking?" she asked herself, wearily.

Quite unconsciously she wandered down by the wharf. Great crowds of ladies and gentlemen were there eagerly waving their handkerchiefs to an incoming steamer.

"How happy they are!" sighed Junie. "They have some one to watch for, some one is coming on that steamer whom they love, while I weep with the poet, who has said:

" ' Oh, this world is a wide world of sorrow;
No one who smiles can efface the sad tear;
I've no one to welcome the light of to-morrow,
No one to share it, when sunshine is here.' "

Compelled by some subtle magnetism, Junie pressed mechanically into the eager, noisy, bustling throng who landed from the steamer.

Suddenly some one elbowed hurriedly through the crowd, and a voice, that thrilled poor little Junie's heart like an electric shock, cried out eagerly to his companion:

"I thank you, captain, for your kind sympathy. I have indeed been sorely tried. Every moment which separates me from my darling seems like years."

The handsome, eager face was turned toward her, and his white, aristocratic hand brushed against the thick veil of the slender little creature, who shrunk back with a low, gasping cry, pressing her fluttering little hands tightly over her heart—shrunk from the adoring young husband, who was wearing his very life out, feverishly counting the moments until he should clasp his little child-bride in his arms and pillow her golden head on his breast, while he explained his terrible adventure to her of that trip to sea,

which had cost him the bitterest heart-pangs he had ever known.

Poor little Junie had held out her hands to him, with a low, piteous, wailing cry.

"Harry, oh, my love—my love!" but the words died on her lips, making no sound.

As she listened to the words that fell from his lips—words that had been the death-knell to the truest little heart that ever beat—"Every moment which separates me from my darling seems like years," Heaven help her! She believed he meant the banker's beautiful daughter.

"How he must love her!" sobbed Junie, and the very thought of her Harry's rapturous greeting with the beautiful, proud banker's daughter made her young, sorely tried heart bleed afresh.

Oh, the pity of it—oh, the pity of it! If she had but obeyed the voice of the waves, that seemed saying, restlessly, "Call to him—call to him!" what a world of misery might have been spared to those two hearts!

"Ah! how easily things go wrong!
A kiss too much, or a sigh too long;
Then follows a tempest, a blinding rain,
And life is never the same again."

Ah! poor, innocent, deluded little Junie, if she had only called him! But Fate, cruel Fate seemed to be playing at cross-purposes with her, and with anguished eyes she saw him drifting out of her life forever.

The thick veil fell all unheeded from her beautiful face down into the seething waters that quickly devoured it.

More than one passer-by paused to look curiously at the beautiful face, pale as marble, raised up to the summer sky, with shadows on it more terrible to behold than the damp dew of death.

"What is the matter, poor child?" asked a kind, motherly woman, gazing pityingly at the white, averted, childish face. "Are you ill?"

"Yes," sobbed Junie, piteously. "I am dying—dying of a broken heart. I did not think a person could live when their heart was broken, and yet I am living when death would be so sweet to me."

The lady shuddered and drew back.

"You are too young to think so hardly of life," she said. "If I judge aright, you can not be more than sixteen."

"I am just sixteen," sighed Junie, "and all the brightness of my life is over, and my one prayer is that I may die and end it all!"

At that moment the lady caught sight of the purse Junie still held carelessly in her hands.

"I can not understand your case," said the lady, greatly puzzled. "Judging from your well-filled purse you are not in want of money. It must be one of two things to drive a young girl like you to such desperate measures. It must be either hunger or love."

"It is love," cried Junie, clasping her little hands. "And yet I would give all the years of my future, and think it worth the price, for just such beautiful, golden moments again as those that crowned my life before I knew that he whom I love so well was false."

"How strange it is we often love best the hand that most cruelly smites us," thought the lady, pityingly, as she gently turned away. She could find no words in which to comfort her.

Still the vast crowd hurried on, never growing less.

Darkness had fallen over the city and the river; the lamps gleamed in the distance like golden stars.

It was dark now, and she had stood there upon the wharf, leaning over the railing, her eyes fixed on the water since noon.

Others would have remembered that they were cold, faint, and hungry—not Junie—she remembered only that she was deserted and alone, that the young husband she

had so madly loved had cast her adrift on the world with the bitterest words that could ever be uttered—"You are not my wife!"

And she had believed so truly in that marriage. She remembered how he had clasped his arms around her and whispered:

"Little Junie, you are mine now. No power on earth can take you from me. Before God and man you are my wife. I shall make you the happiest little girl in the whole wide world. No love shall be so beautiful, so sweet as ours."

But a few hours had passed since then, and all of that beautiful love-dream was broken. Her sun of happiness had set in sudden gloom.

She had broken the hearts of her good old father and her patient mother, who had loved their little Junie, their petted, willful child, so well. Even Fanny would never forgive her for her sin. She had trusted her love with her very life, and love had played her so cruelly false.

"There is nothing else left for me to do but to die," she sobbed, aloud, gazing down into the dark, cruel water. "To die and end it all."

"Nay," said a voice behind her, "you must not do that; life may be very hard with you, but you must not do that."

Junie turned round slowly and saw the same kind-hearted lady eying her fixedly.

"Why not?" cried Junie, bitterly. "I shall kill myself sooner or later. Why not now? The sooner the better. I have been waiting for the crowd to grow less, but it never does. I have been praying to be left here alone—alone, to die and end it all!"

"Many a poor girl comes here, young as you, for that purpose and no other. That is why the wharf is so carefully guarded. If you were to leap in, there are enough about to save you. Give up the thought and come away.

You are so young. You will get over this in time, and make something out of your life yet. You are young, and very, very beautiful, my child."

"Beautiful!" cried the poor little child-bride, with a piteous moan. "Yet it has brought me only misery. If I could take these two hands and mar it, I would do it. I used to be delighted when he praised my face and called me his beautiful Junie. If I had been plain, he would not have taught me to love him. My beauty has been my curse."

"You must come away from here," responded the lady, pityingly, and she asked her the same question that the sympathetic little dancer had asked, "Have you no home?"

"No," she answered, in a low, sobbing voice. "I have nowhere to go—no home, no friends!"

"I believe you are a good, honest girl, more sinned against than sinning," said the lady, slowly; "and I have half made up my mind to take you home with me. I am housekeeper for a very wealthy gentleman and his daughter. I could find use for you, if you think of looking for work anywhere. I feel sorry to see one so young and so beautiful cast so cruelly adrift on the world—so young and so innocent, for I feel sure, if I read faces truly, that you are innocent. And my employer would say I had done right in 'plucking a brand from the burning,' for my employer, Banker Melrose, is as good as he is rich. Perhaps you have heard of Banker Melrose and his beautiful daughter Louisa?"

Junie uttered a low cry as the name of her rival fell upon her ears, and she fell backward against the railing, and would have been precipitated into the dark water beneath had not her companion stretched out her hand and grasped her at that opportune moment.

Junie's low cry attracted the attention of two dark-

cloaked figures, who were evidently searching for some one among the crowd.

"It is she," said one of the men, in a low, guarded, cautious voice. "But do you think we can carry out the scheme successfully? If she should take it into her head to cry out, we are lost."

"Trust to me that there will be no outcry," answered his companion, significantly. "I have helped more than one gentleman in this way before. All things are possible in New York."

"Very true," replied his companion, nervously; "but I hope you won't make a bungle of the affair."

"You are ill!" cried the lady, pityingly, gazing into Junie's face. You are trembling so you are not able to stand. Wait here for a moment, and I will have the druggist's clerk across the way bring you a glass of wine."

Mrs. Gray had scarcely crossed the street ere the sound of a woman's stifled, piercing scream fell upon the night air, and the next moment two men, supporting a slender, girlish figure between them, heavily veiled, dashed suddenly up the steps to an elevated railway car, which they hurriedly boarded, and in an instant the wharf and the glimmering river lay far in the distance behind them; and the astonished housekeeper, too dazed and bewildered for speech or action, stood gazing at the rapidly vanishing car and the white, terrified young face pressed close against the pane, and two little white hands beating the air and appealingly stretched out for help.

Like one in a dream, she glanced hurriedly around her. The beautiful young girl was gone, and she realized the terrible truth.

"Great God! that beautiful, innocent young girl has been abducted from the midst of this throng, under our very eyes! What shall I do?"

CHAPTER XII.

JUNIE'S startling abduction had been so sudden, that for some moments she was too dazed and bewildered to fully comprehend it.

She saw the stations, the gas-lamps, lighted windows, and house-tops flash past her with lightning-like rapidity.

She tried to tear away the thick shawl, that nearly stifled her, and cry out.

"Don't attempt that, or it will be the worse for you," hissed a voice in her ear, which she instantly recognized as Squire Granger's; and her poor little heart almost ceased beating in the intensity of her terror.

The car was not crowded; two or three vacant seats near the door had been chosen, and into one of these Junie had been placed, her captors seating themselves on each side of her.

Even in New York, where startling sensations are of hourly occurrence, a closely muffled young girl, half lifted, half carried into a car by two gentlemen, attracts general curiosity and comment; and the squire saw at once that something must be done to divert suspicion from their daring game.

He could hear the conversation carried on in a low key by two strangers opposite, who were regarding Junie intently.

"I do not believe it is all right," one of them was saying. "Don't you see the appealing look of horror in her blue eyes? I can not shake off the notion that they are saying, as plain as eyes can speak, 'Help me!'"

"Pshaw!" laughed his companion, uproariously; then, adding, in a subdued whisper: "If there was anything wrong about that affair, do you think the two men opposite would have boarded a train crowded like this? She's

probably his daughter. I mean the fleshy old gent to the right."

The words suggested a bold idea to the wily squire.

"That was a long, tedious operation, my daughter has just gone through," said the squire, in a voice sufficiently loud for half of the car to hear, "but she stood it capital-ly. I told her mother she was plucky."

As he spoke he patted Junie on the cheek.

She shrunk from his touch as though a viper had stung her. But the squire was equal to the emergency.

"Tnere, that's just like me, I've hurt her. Papa will take good care, pet, not to pat those rosy cheeks again until you get well and strong."

"Oh, the villain—the villain!" gasped Junie, in an instant comprehending the bold game her captors were playing; but the wild cries would not penetrate the thick folds of the shawl. She was fast becoming powerless to move hand or foot.

A strange drowsiness was stealing over her, benumbing every sense. In vain her agonized gaze appealed to the strangers sitting opposite. She saw the squire's ruse had completely misled them.

Would no one help her?

The strangers opposite left the car at the next station, leaving their end of the car, with the exception of Junie and her two captors, quite unoccupied; and with them departed Junie's last hope of rescue.

With a violent effort she loosened her hands from the thick shawl, tearing desperately at the bandage about her mouth, crying out, piercingly:

"Help! oh, for the love of Heaven, will somebody help me? My enemies are carrying me away. Help—help!"

The noise and confusion occasioned by the moving train, the ringing of bells, and the sonorous puffing of the engine completely drowned that wild appeal for help.

Squire Granger turned to her. white w the very lips.

"It will not be well for you to repeat this scene," he said, harshly.

"I shall repeat it," she panted, defiantly. "I shall cry for help every time the train stops! I shall cry out until some one comes to my rescue!"

"We shall see," declared the squire, with a low, taunting laugh. "A dose of chloroform will soon settle your stubbornness."

As he spoke he suddenly pressed a handkerchief to her face, full of a strange, sweet, subtle odor, and, in spite of the valiant effort Junie made to throw off the terrible spell that was locking every nerve in a horrible vise, the white lids drooped heavily over the blue eyes, the golden head drooped heavily on her breast, and poor little Junie, pitifully unconscious, was at Squire Granger's mercy.

They left the car at the next station, entering a coach which stood in waiting.

"Is everything all right, Henry?" inquired the squire, anxiously, as he hastily placed Junie in the coach, and entered quickly himself, after paying the accomplice who had planned and executed the daring abduction so cleverly, and dismissing him.

"Everything is done strictly in accordance with your directions, uncle. I wrote the letter, as you desired, as nearly imitating Junie's handwriting (from the scrap of paper you gave me) as possible. I addressed it to my brother Harry, placing it on the table, where it would be sure to attract his eye the moment he entered the room."

"Heaven knows when that will be!" muttered the squire.

"Harry is back in the city already," declared Henry Granger, triumphantly. "He has received and read the letter, and the heaven works well. The afternoon papers are full of the affair, but, thanks to fortune, the names of the parties are kindly suppressed out of respect to the grief-stricken husband."

"Did you get copies of the papers?" asked the squire, nervously.

"Of course," replied Henry, producing some three or four copies of different journals which bore the same startling heading:

"THE SAD ENDING OF A RUNAWAY LOVE-MATCH.

The romantic separation of the young husband, who is carried off to sea while in a friend's state-room, bidding his friend *bon voyage*. The frantic grief of the handsome young fellow when he discovers his sorry plight.

"The passengers unanimously petitioned the captain to signal the first return steamer, which occurred about midnight; and, amid loud cheers and the waving of hundreds of handkerchiefs, the lover-husband returns to the city. But," add the papers, "here ends the romance, and the heart-rending sequel begins: instead of a beautiful, golden-haired, heart-broken bride bounding into the truant's arms, he finds a letter which she has penned, on the table awaiting him—which read as follows:

"HARRY, your absence has just taught me a startling truth. I am sorry you persuaded me to run away from home and marry you. I am too young to be anybody's wife. I thought I cared for you—more than I really do—and now that the romance has worn off (please don't be angry with me), I find I do not love you, but I do care for somebody else. Do not search for me, you can not find me. Try and forget your unworthy
JUNIE."

"The young bridegroom, pallid as death itself, had crushed the note for one second only in his nerveless fingers, then turned, like one mad, and rushed frantically from the room where he had received the cruellest blow that ever shattered 'Love's young dream.'"

"Did you shadow his whereabouts?—of course you did! He will be searching for Junie," cried the squire, breathlessly.

"You do not know Harry's pride as well as I do," retorted the false-hearted twin brother, coolly. Continuing: "Do you think he would seek to reclaim a bride whom he thinks prefers another to himself, and coolly abandons him ere the honey-moon has begun? Never! Harry would die before he would let her know how the wound had entered his heart. The intense pride of the Grangers is almost a curse. Why, Harry never would forgive me, for that—that—"

"Yes, I know," interrupted the squire, "and I held out against you, too. But let by-gones be by-gones. That affair shall never be raked up again, unless you play me false."

"There is no fear of that," replied Henry Granger, his dark face flushing redly. "Why should I play you false, uncle? I'm sure I'm not in love with this girl, and by assisting you, you have promised to make me your heir; and with wealth at my command, I can win Miss Melrose, the wealthiest heiress in New York. Think you I would throw away a double chance, like that, for the affections of a girl who hasn't a dollar?"

"I see you are very sensible, and view this matter in the right light," replied the squire, chuckling good-humoredly. "Everything will move on smoothly, if we can only manage to keep Junie out of Harry's way. Does your brother know that you are in New York, Henry?" he asked, suddenly.

"No. He thinks I am abroad. After we had that bitter quarrel I purchased a ticket for London, but changed my mind about going at the last moment. I saw my name was published among those of the outgoing passengers."

"Good, good!" cried the squire, chuckling. "As long as he does not know that you or I are anywhere near New York, he will not suspect that we had anything to do with this affair. Have you made arrangements with Mrs.

Burt about taking charge of her?" asked the squire, nodding toward Junie, who showed some signs of returning consciousness.

The nephew nodded, and at that moment the coach drew up before an isolated stone house on the outskirts of the city, and a dark-browed woman, who was evidently expecting the trio, stood in the door-way, with a flickering candle in her hand, to welcome them.

"Don't let her see you," whispered the squire, warningly, again nodding toward Junie; "you are too infernally like that brother of yours who won her from me."

"I have guarded against that," replied Henry, producing a blonde wig and mustache of the same golden hue, which he hastily donned, exclaiming, triumphantly, "What do you think of the transformation, uncle? I would defy the cleverest detective in New York to discover this was a disguise."

"You can't change the wicked gleam in your eyes—that alone would betray you," retorted Squire Granger, bluntly, eying him coolly and critically, mentally wondering if he really was as indifferent to little Junie as he pretended to be.

The squire lifted Junie in his strong arms and carried her into the sitting-room, into which the woman whom he addressed as Mrs. Burt silently led the way. He placed her in a huge willow rocker, and at that moment Junie opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" she murmured, faintly, gazing in bewilderment at her strange surroundings and at the hard, cold, defiant face of the dark-browed woman who held the flickering candle in her hand.

"This is your home," answered the squire, stepping boldly forward. "I swore to be revenged upon you, Junie Dean, for casting off my love and my fortune for a younger, handsomer, penniless fellow, and I have kept my word. Your handsome, reckless lover, Harry Granger,

has cast you adrift on the world. No revenge could be so sweet to me as that knowledge, and to know that you are in my power at last. This is your home," he continued, mercilessly. "Here you shall stay until you consent to become my wife."

"Never! never!" cried Junie, desperately. "In the sight of Heaven, I am Harry Granger's wife, even though he denies me before the world. I was so young, and so innocent and trusting, and I loved him so! Though he was fickle and false, and cast me adrift, as you say, I love him still! oh, I love him still! and I shall love him until my heart slowly breaks of grief and ends it all!"

She raised her little white hands and her beautiful, white, despairing, childish face heavenward, crying out, in thrilling anguish:

"Oh, my darling! my love! why did you forsake me, and leave me to the mercy of my enemy? Oh, repent of your rashness, love, and save me, save me!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"You will have plenty of time to reflect upon the matter," replied Squire Granger, raising his hat and bowing low, with mock politeness. "It is not every penniless farmer's daughter that has the opportunity to fling away the chances of marrying a wealthy husband as you have to-night; but I warn you to take care, my pretty, willful bird; you may try my patience too far by your defiant obstinacy. Ponder well on my words. I have sworn to make you my wife by fair means or foul, and my wife you shall be."

He quitted the room as he spoke, followed by the woman, who had set the candle down upon the table, and a fair-haired stranger whose terrible mocking eyes seemed to hold her spell-bound.

Left to herself, Junie walked restlessly up and down the

room, vainly striving to open the strong oaken door that barred her exit.

"Why was I ever born," she wailed out sharply, "if there is nothing but sorrow in store for me? I was so happy in my childhood simplicity and ignorance before he came, wooing me to sorrow and the keenest woe by his honeyed words of love. Oh, if I had only known more! Had I been wealthy, educated, and accomplished, like the banker's proud, beautiful daughter, it might have been different. I must learn to despise him," she cried, bitterly, "tear his image out of my heart, though it break. Other girls have lived on when their hearts were broken; so must I."

Her little hand hit against the pocket of her dress which contained her purse, and the daring thought which suggested itself to her mind almost took her breath away.

Gold would do all things; would it not fling open wide the grim doors of her prison-house? Could not her jailer be bribed with the gold the kind little dancer had given her?

Tremblingly, she sat down in the rocker again, and with tremulous fingers counted over the contents of the purse in the dim candle-light. A thousand dollars—a fortune—even if she offered half of it to the woman whom she had heard the squire instruct to keep "strict watch on her," would it not be ample inducement?

She replaced one half of the money in her purse, and carefully secured the balance in the lining of her dress; but not a moment too soon. Shuffling footsteps sounded in the hall-way without, and the next instant the door was flung open and the woman entered with a cup of tea and a slice of toast temptingly arranged on a tray.

"You'd better eat something," she said, scowlingly, turning toward Junie, who, in spite of her braveness, cowered perceptibly from her. "Beauty don't improve

by starving, and when your beauty's gone I wouldn't give much for you. Your face is your fortune."

"My face has been my curse," cried Junie, breaking out afresh in heart-rending sobs. "Those who are beautiful win love. My face brings me nothing but the keenest woe."

"It has brought you Squire Granger's love, and an offer of marriage. You are mad, girl, to let such a chance slip by."

"Squire Granger is an old man," cried Junie, in horror, "and Heaven never intended a young girl to marry a man old enough to be her father. It is a sin. I would die first, and call death welcome."

"You'd better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave," quoted the dark-browed woman, "especially when he's as wealthy as the squire is. Money will do everything."

"Money keeps me captive here," wailed Junie, plaintively; "but if I had more to offer you to set me free than he gives you for keeping me a prisoner here, would you let me go?" she cried with ill-concealed eagerness.

"What's the use of talking like that?" said the woman, angrily. "You haven't any money. You're only trying to tempt me."

"Do be tempted," cried Junie, "for I have some money, and you shall have it all if you will only give me my freedom."

"How much have you got about you?" asked the woman, dubiously, eying her suspiciously, her black beads of eyes twinkling greedily.

"I have five hundred dollars, which shall be yours if you will only set me free."

"Does anybody know you have got it about you?" asked Mrs. Burt, slowly.

"No, nobody knows that I have a cent," answered Junie, something like hope gleaming in her eyes.

"Well, I'll think it over and let you know," she said, hurriedly quitting the room.

For an hour or more Junie impatiently walked the floor, expecting her to return momentarily, but no sound broke the silence of the long tedious hours, except the pattering of her own footsteps.

At last tired nature asserted itself, and Junie threw herself down upon the couch in one corner of the room, and slept.

The sun was high up in the heavens when she awoke the next morning; its rays were shining directly in her eyes.

"My jailer did not come back," she sighed wearily, and involuntarily her hand crept to the pocket of her dress. She started to her feet with a low cry. Her purse was gone, and with it the five hundred dollars it contained.

"I have been robbed!" she cried out, piteously, "for I know it was in the pocket of my dress when I fell asleep."

"Robbed, eh? robbed of what?" cried a coarse voice behind her, and turning suddenly around, she beheld Mrs. Burt—ugly and more hideous-looking than ever in the clear morning light—eying her coolly.

"I have been robbed of my purse!" cried Junie, faintly, "and I believe you have it, for not a soul besides you knew I had so much money in my purse."

"A likely story, that!" retorted the woman, maliciously. "No one would believe such a foolish story; come now, you know you hadn't a cent in the world. What's the use of trumping up a story of that kind?"

"I see how it is," continued Junie, paling to the very lips. "You have stolen the money that I confessed I had about me, and now you will keep me to gain the money Squire Granger will pay you for this wretched work."

"Make no accusations that you can't prove," answered the woman, stolidly. "You've got to stay here, as the squire told you last night, until you consent to marry him."

Junie turned away, too angry to reply, and the woman continued:

"You can have the liberty of the house and the grounds; but I warn you not to think of escaping, for you couldn't, even if you attempted it; and if you are contrary, I have my orders from the squire what to do with you."

"You can kill me if you wish," cried Junie, desperately. "Life is not worth the living, and death would be a welcome relief."

"Your death would not benefit me," retorted Mrs. Burt, complacently. "I shall take good care to see that you don't put yourself out of the way."

"I will escape from here, or I will kill myself," thought Junie, desperately. "I do not see why I should cling to life, anyhow, for it is not worth the living without Harry."

Live without him! Ah, Heaven! how could she live without him?

"Oh! it is too late to think I could tear out the love for him which fills my heart and my very soul."

She had done no wrong, only to love him, to believe him, trust him blindly, and now she was suffering for it, as criminals suffer for crime.

There are women who love so keenly, so passionately, their love is made their greatest torture, their sweetest pleasure, their greatest pain—it was so with little Junie. Try hard as she might to despise the handsome, dark-eyed lover-husband, she ended by loving him with a more desperate, hopeless love than ever.

Even when she believed he had so cruelly deserted her, she never once prayed to Heaven for vengeance upon him; she only prayed that she might die, because she could not live without him.

She took advantage of Mrs. Burt's permission, that she might have the freedom of the grounds surrounding the

house, to explore it thoroughly in hopes she might find some loop-hole of escape; but no—the smooth, high, grim walls seemed to shut off all hopes of scaling them.

“If I do escape, it must certainly be over those walls,” she thought; and every day for the next week that followed she spent in examining the stone wall; she had found a stone slightly loosened, and every hour she could spend in loosening it without detection was used by her. One day, after she had been there for a week or more, she went as usual to the stone wall; as she turned a curve in the walk she stood face to face with a stranger with fair hair and curling, blonde mustache, intently examining the stone that she had loosened.

Junie started back with a low cry. What was there in that familiar form that struck such a thrill of terror to her sensitive soul? He heard her light, faltering steps, and turned toward her, lifting his straw hat from his fair hair with a jaunty nod.

For one brief moment their eyes met.

“Where had she seen such bold, wicked, dark eyes?” she asked herself—those bold, dark, flashing eyes at such variance with his fair curling hair.

She would have turned and fled precipitately, but he stepped boldly into the path before her.

“Do not be afraid of me,” he entreated, in a slightly foreign accent. “I have heard of your captivity here, and how they are trying to force you to wed an old man—a young girl like you—and I am sorry for you—so sorry that I will help you to freedom and happiness, if you will trust yourself to me.”

“If you wish to help me, and are my friend, why did you let Squire Granger lock me up here? I saw you in the room the night I was brought here,” she answered, suspiciously.

“It must have been some one else who resembles me whom you saw,” he replied, facing her calmly and utter-

ing the falsehood unblushingly. "I was never here in this part of the country until three days ago. I was riding past, and I saw your face, and heard you cry out appealingly, 'Will no one help me from the fate that is closing in around me? No one shall force me to marry old Squire Granger. I will die first,' and those words and your face have haunted me ever since."

CHAPTER XIV.

LET us return, dear reader, to Harry Granger—the young bridegroom so cruelly deceived by that fatal letter which poor little Junie's fingers had never penned.

He rushed out into the street like one mad; there was a strange gleam in his dark, mournful eyes, and the broad brow from which his dark, damp curls were pushed back was pale and cold as marble.

"I was mad to persuade little Junie to marry me," he thought, bitterly—he remembered, too, the words of the letter—"I am too young to be anybody's wife." "It is too true," he cried; "Junie is little more than a gay, romping child—a butterfly in bonds—but I thought such a worshipful love as mine must surely win love in return. She must surely have gone back to the farm; it is as natural for young girls to flit back to their homes as for young birds to flit back to their nests."

A sudden hope leaped up in his heart: perhaps she had done this out of girlish pique, because he had stayed so long, and in her angry little heart, not knowing the cause, she had done this for revenge.

As a drowning man catches at a straw, Harry caught at this hope.

The outgoing train was just starting. Harry swung himself aboard with something of a smile on his pale, handsome face, thinking how he would catch the little

rebel in his arms, crush her against his heart, and cover that rosy mouth with kisses for her cruel desertion of him.

"I will not believe the little witch cares for somebody else; she simply wrote that to terrify me, knowing what a jealous fellow I am. She has given me a terrible fright, but I will forgive her for all only to have her in my arms once more."

The train seemed to creep along to the eager, impetuous Harry, yet he told himself every mile brought him nearer his loved one.

The dark shades of evening were stealing over the trees and sleeping flowers as Harry alighted at the station and made his way over the green grassy hill-slopes, up the well-remembered path that led across the orchard, and through the melon patch up to Farmer Dean's cottage.

With noiseless feet he stole eagerly up to the window, and peered anxiously within.

Farmer Dean sat in his accustomed arm-chair by the fire-place, where a fire had been lighted, for the evenings were chilly, and Fanny was laying the cloth for the evening meal.

Little Junie's chair was empty, so was Mrs. Dean's. "Make haste, father, and finish your supper," grumbled Fanny, pouring the tea, "for it's nothing but getting meals and washing dishes from morning till night, and I'm tired to death of it."

"Junie was never tired of doing things for her poor old father," sighed the farmer, audibly.

"It's always Junie, Junie!" flashed Fanny, angrily. "You never reproach that little ingrate for stealing away my handsome lover from me, but I shall have a glorious revenge upon her by this time."

"Stop, Fanny, stop!" cried the old man, brokenly; "you break my heart when you talk so about poor little Junie. She was only a child, Fanny, you must remember that—a petted child. Don't reproach her for marrying

him, for, somehow, I feel that all is not right with my little pet. I have strange, troubled dreams about her—troubled dreams.”

“My dreams are waking ones, full of revenge,” muttered Fanny, her black eyes gleaming maliciously; “I could not find a better tool to execute my planning than—what’s that—” She stopped short in her muttering, hearing a slight noise at the window. “How nervous I’m growing. Here, father, draw your chair up to the table.”

Only two plates were laid. Ah, where was Junie—the horror-stricken young husband had gathered from their conversation the startling, heart-sick revelation that she was not there.

“My God! what a blind dupe I have been,” he cried, fiercely, fairly staggering blindly down the path again; “the words she wrote must be too true; if she is not home she has gone (as her letter implied she had) with some old lover. Oh, Heaven! and I trusted little Junie so!”

He wandered aimlessly down by the brook-side where he had wooed and won little Junie that memorable moonlight night, flung himself down on the same mossy log, suffering an anguish more bitter than death itself would have been.

Afar off in the distance, he saw the lights of The Grange shining out from the silk-draped windows like mocking, evil eyes.

“You have your revenge upon me, uncle,” he cried, hoarsely, setting his lips firmly together—“ay, your revenge would be complete if you but knew that little Junie fled from me ere our honey-moon began.”

He flung himself down upon the log again, from which he had but just risen, burying his face in his hands, wondering, despairingly, what course he should pursue next, anger, jealousy, and despair rising in his breast for supremacy.

Little caring what became of him, he boarded the train bound for New York again, a thousand plans revolving in

his mind, which he resolved to put into execution the moment he reached the city.

The train was crowded, and newsboys were energetically disposing of their evening papers, and the scandal-loving passengers were eagerly discussing some new sensation.

Too wretchedly miserable to care for or heed other people's sorrows, Harry Granger closed his eyes, planning how richly he should punish the rascal who had dared persuade little Junie to leave him. All the fire in his veins blazed up hotly as he thought of the words, "I find I do not care so much for you as I really thought I did, but I do care for somebody else."

The mention of his own name upon a stranger's lips just in front of him startled him suddenly from his miserable thoughts.

White as a marble statue, he sat there hearing strangers coolly discuss the main points of that sweet little romance he had held so sacred—that love-dream that had been the very poetry of love.

"That runaway love-match has a peculiar *finale*," said the man in the front seat, pointing out a paragraph to his companion. "I see in to-night's paper, the pretty little golden-haired bride has filed a petition for a legal separation from the handsome Harry, and in my opinion if he has proper grit he won't oppose the action—no man of spirit would in such a case."

For one brief instant the very life-blood seemed turned to ice around Harry's heart; his breath came thick and hard, and the words he had just heard uttered seemed hissed on the air with red-hot tongues of seething fire.

They discussed the subject freely on all sides of him, little dreaming the handsome young man, with a face pale as sculptured marble, was the hero of that heart-rending romance.

"Will you let me see the article you just spoke of?"

asked Harry, hoarsely, touching the stranger on the shoulder.

"Certainly," he replied, handing over the paper and pointing out the paragraph, adding, pleasantly:

"It was rather a strange affair, and the rival would find but little mercy at that bridegroom's hands if they ever met."

"He would strangle him on sight," cried Harry, hoarsely, and the deep pain expressed in those tremulous words made the stranger turn and scrutinize him closely, mentally commenting:

"Poor fellow! he must have suffered through some one he loves, and yet it can scarcely be probable, for a handsome young fellow like that generally carries women's heart by storm—he is not one to suffer for love, with princely beauty like his and winning ways."

Meanwhile Harry had scanned every word of the terrible paragraph, his noble face flushing, then growing dead white alternately—read the paragraph which Squire Granger (after seeing Junie safely secured in the isolated house) had inserted himself in all the leading journals, that—

"Junie Granger, through her attorneys, Messrs. Hunt & Berry, had filed a petition for a legal separation from her husband, Harry Granger, which she prayed would be granted her."

The paper fell from Harry's nerveless fingers, but the groan that he uttered died away on his white, set lips.

"She shall have the separation she craves," he thought, bitterly, bowing his head down on his white, trembling hands; "I will not oppose it, though it tears my heart out by the roots. Oh, the inconstancy of women!" he cried out, bitterly, to himself. "There is nothing under the light of heaven so alluringly beautiful as Junie, yet so cruelly, deceptively false! I shall have but one aim in

life now," he cried, proudly: "I will meet her face to face, but I shall not reproach her—haughtily pass her by as a stranger would. I will show her that women will worship the beauty and the love she has so wantonly cast aside."

His kingly beauty had been of little consequence to him until now, but now he would make it his strong weapon—to show her how others appreciated him.

Although, he admitted to himself, he would love her madly, recklessly, hopelessly—under all this mask of gaiety he would assume; until the day that he died, every golden hair of her beautiful head would be precious to him beyond price; yet she should never know it. He would build a wall of pride between them that should stand while they both lived; he would school himself to gaze into her eyes if they met, or hear her voice, crushing back the mad torrent of love that would thrill his heart, and crush back the impulse that would urge him to clasp her madly to his heart, praying her to love him, for life was unendurable without her.

And poor Harry rushed blindly into the pit Squire Granger had dug for him, building a wall of pride between himself and poor, faithful little Junie who loved him so well, and only God above could have foretold the pitiful consequences which would ensue from it.

CHAPTER XV.

For some moments Junie stood irresolute, regarding the handsome, fair-haired stranger as a trembling dove does, who feels itself irresistibly attracted by the mesmeric gaze of a serpent from whom it has not the power to fly.

"Your words and your face have haunted me from the first moment I saw you," he repeated, "and if you will trust to me, I will gladly aid you to escape."

Still Junie hesitated; although sweet freedom, for which

she had been pining, was offered her, some subtle impulse seemed to hold her back.

"If you remain here," he went on, "you will be forced to marry Squire Granger; your fate lies in your own hands—it is for you to choose as you will."

She thought of the words the kind lady had spoken to her on the wharf: "You must always beware of strangers, child, for a city like New York is full of pitfalls for the feet of the innocent and unwary."

"I am between two fires," thought Junie. "Which is the more to be feared—this young man who offers me freedom, or that terrible old squire who would marry me against my will?"

"I should think there would be no hesitation in your decision," said the young man, quickly. "Surely you have not made up your mind voluntarily to marry Squire Granger, after all?"

"Oh, no, no!—a thousand times no!" cried Junie, in terror. "I would die first—indeed I would! and, if you really will help me to escape from this horrible place, I shall be grateful to you as long as I live!"

"It will be the greatest pleasure of my life in rendering you any assistance in my power; you have only to command me. Have you any destination in particular that you wish to be taken to?" he inquired.

"Yes, I want to go home to papa," sobbed Junie, "and back to the farm where I was once so happy among the Kentucky hills."

The stranger could scarcely repress the gleam of triumph that crept into his bold, black eyes, but he only answered, simply:

"I shall be very pleased to see you safe to your home."

"But how can I get out of this place, it is so securely walled in?" she asked, her poor little heart fluttering excitedly.

For a moment he hesitated. "It is a bold undertak-

ing, but I will risk it," he thought; then turning to her, he said, quietly: "I have discovered a secret entrance through this wall. I found my way in that way."

As he spoke, he struck one of the stones with his walking-stick, and immediately the huge stone rolled aside, revealing a triangular space, through which a medium-sized person could pass with little difficulty.

"The ground is swampy and marshy on the other side of the wall," he said, turning toward her, suspiciously; "and if you attempted to make your way out of here alone, you would get lost in the marshes. I warn you, do not think of attempting it."

"Oh, no! I will not attempt it alone!" cried Junie, shuddering.

"I will be here at midnight," he explained. "Stand under this tree, where you are standing now, and I will come to you here."

"I will be here," replied Junie, gratefully.

He touched his hat gracefully to her, and disappeared like a shadow through the opening in the stone wall, which instantly swung into place again.

Junie nervously turned and retraced her steps toward the house, wondering how she should pass the long hours that would intervene between then and midnight.

"Oh, here you are at last!" cried Mrs. Burt, in a tone of relief. "I have been looking everywhere for you—some one is here waiting for you."

Before Junie could frame a reply, Mrs. Burt pushed the door of the best room open, and Junie found herself in the hateful presence of Squire Granger.

"Good-morning, little Junie," he exclaimed, advancing to meet her with outstretched hands. "You are looking as fresh as your pretty namesake—a June rose—I assure you."

Junie recoiled from him with a low cry.

"Do not come near me—do not dare touch me, adding

insult to injury!" she cried. "No one but the wickedest of men would have abducted an unprotected girl, and kept her from her home and friends, because she refused to marry him. You may as well let me go," she cried, eagerly, "for you have the same answer now that you will have ten years from now. I shall never marry you—I would kill myself first."

"I admire you all the more for your dash of spirit and resentment," chuckled the squire; audaciously adding, "Men like best these pretty willful little beauties who are hard to win. I shall break that haughty pride, my fair rebel, you can depend upon it."

"Have you no mercy?" cried Junie, desperately. "If I should kneel to you, would it be of any use? I am so young, perhaps I could make something of my life yet. It is cruel of an old man like you wanting to force such heavy chains about a young life as a marriage with you would be. Young girls can not love old men. Oh, why do you ask it or expect it?"

Her little white hands were clasped supplicatingly before her, and the sunlight, drifting in through the parted curtains and falling on her pretty, childish face and curling golden hair, made her a dangerously fair picture upon which the squire's evil eyes rested gloatingly.

"That is one of the affairs best known to ourselves," retorted Squire Granger, grimly. "There is too much fresh young beauty to be had for the asking to be satisfied with gray hair and wrinkles."

Junie turned away, sick at heart, with a shudder of disgust.

"Nothing can change my decision," continued the squire, complacently. "You are free now to marry, and before the sun rises on another day you shall be my wife."

"Never!" cried Junie, deathly pale.

"I repeat that you shall be my wife. No power on earth can change your fate; it is irrevocably fixed."

"God will find some way to prevent it," thought Junie, in terror. "I shall trust blindly to Heaven to the last. No minister will marry us, when I tell them my story," cried Junie, triumphantly. "They are God's people. They will not aid in such a wrong against an innocent, helpless girl."

"Money will do everything," cried the squire, significantly. "Do you suppose a hungry minister would refuse a well-filled purse for the whims of a foolish girl? Your entreaties will not be of the least avail, as you shall see. You are free this day," he cried, triumphantly, "and on this day you shall be mine. Prepare to receive me," he continued, tauntingly, "for, when I return, which will be some time in the course of the day, it will be to claim my pretty Junie, whether she be willing or no. *Au revoir*, sweet one, until I return."

He arose from his chair, bowing himself out of her presence; and when Junie found herself once more alone she flung herself down on the faded carpet, giving full vent to her terrible anguish.

"All means of escape will be cut off, for the squire will return before midnight. But it must not—it shall not be!" she cried, wildly. "Marriage with him would be worse than a living death!"

She wrung her little white hands in misery and terror, sobbing out in her anguish the one cry that always rose to those coral lips:

"Oh, Harry, my false, cruel love! why did you not kill me rather than let me live to know you false, and suffer all this? What have I ever done that Heaven should show me no mercy?"

Squire Granger's words, "You are free this day," still rang in her ears. She had not the least idea of the true meaning conveyed in those few significant words. Ah! if she had but known!

"He should not have taunted me with *that*," she

sobbed, piteously. "Heaven knows I believed myself a lawfully wedded bride until Harry broke my heart with those cruel words, 'You are not my wife!' Squire Granger will soon be back," she cried, pantingly, springing to her feet. "He must not find me here. I must escape, or I must die! I would be better off if I were dead," she wailed, sharply. "Nobody cares for me in this cold, bitter world. Everybody is plotting against me. Oh, dear Heaven! was ever a young girl's life so pitifully wretched as mine? There is no room in this hard, dreary world for 'little Junie,' as poor papa used to call me. Oh, four-leaf clover! four-leaf clover! you brought me nothing but the bitterest of woe in the sweet nectar of love, that sunny summer day! It is only one short month since then, yet a life-time of sorrow is compressed into those few fleeting days."

With a hard, bitter laugh, that sounded strangely pitiful from such sweet lips, Junie fled quickly from the house into the grounds.

Mrs. Burt, feeling secure that there was no possible way for Junie to escape, had become gradually less vigilant; and she paid little heed to the flying little figure rushing so wildly past her out into the grounds.

Like some desperate young creature brought to bay by its cruel, relentless persecutors, she flung herself with all her strength against the grim rock that had responded so quickly to the magical touch of the stranger.

Useless, useless—she might as well have attempted to, have touched the blue dome above her with her tiny white hands; the stone stood firm, resisting her most frantic efforts.

Suddenly from the direction of the house she heard some one calling her name. She knew the voice but too well—it was Squire Granger's.

The pitiful prayer she uttered for escape died away upon her cold lips in a moan. She crouched down by the cold,

gray rocky wall as if supplicating shelter from her persecutor. She looked through the trees and saw him swiftly approaching the spot where she stood; he was not alone, a stranger was with him, and she saw at once by his garb that he was a minister.

"My doom is fixed," she told herself. "Their faces show me I shall find no mercy there; one more turn in the path and they will be face to face with me."

CHAPTER XVI

"WHAT am I to do?" cried Junie, wildly, striking the sharp stones of the massive walls and beating the air with her bruised little hands. "My enemies are closing in around me—the plank of escape has slipped from under my feet; all is lost! lost! lost!"

Her head fell forward heavily against the jagged rock as she wailed out the last word faintly, when lo! as though directed by the hand of fate, her golden head struck against the secret spring which confined the rock to its place, and in an instant it rolled aside.

With a joyous cry Junie darted through the opening, taking the precaution of putting the stone back into place, however.

"Free — free!" she cried, thankfully, with a wildly beating heart. "I must hide myself in the marshes until dusk, at least," she thought, confusedly, stopping a moment under a tree to deliberate. A small bundle, carefully wrapped up in a dark woolen shawl lying on the grass at her feet, caught her eye.

"Perhaps I shall need this shawl when the darkness and dews of night fall over the marshes," she thought.

She stooped to gather it up, when lo! something dropped from its folds—a blonde wig of pale-gold hair, and a curling mustache to match, which she recognized instantly.

The cry of horror died away on the girl's white lips in a

wild, startled sob, as the thrilling revelation came to her that the golden hair and mustache lying at her feet had adorned the head and face of the stranger, who was to have helped her to escape at midnight—the stranger with the magnetic, bold, black eyes, which were at such variance with his fair hair. “Why was he in disguise? Every one is false,” she cried, in breathless, horror-struck amazement; “everywhere I turn I find the path beset with new dangers, and I do not know whom to trust.”

Still, thanks to kind fate, she yet had five hundred dollars saved up, sewed in the lining of her dress; she was thankful she had had the forethought to put that amount carefully away, or it would have been stolen with the rest of the contents of her purse.

Too startled by her latest discovery to venture to remain anywhere in that vicinity lest Squire Granger or her new unknown foe should track her down, poor Junie sped quickly on through the damp swamp as fast as her trembling feet could carry her.

The golden sun was just setting when Junie reached the outskirts of the city, and saw—oh, welcome sight!—a street car, which she quickly signaled, and entered, sinking down on the hard seat with a feeling of intense relief.

The car crossed many fashionable avenues, yet poor Junie, the discarded young bride, gazed listlessly from the window, seeing little of the beauty around her.

They reached a crowded thoroughfare, in which many handsome equipages halted, waiting until the car should pass, and among them Junie saw the exquisite little phaeton she had seen once before, and in it sat the beautiful, scornful girl who had won Harry's love from her—Harry, who even at that moment was sitting by her side, his handsome face bent toward her, just as though he had not broken, then cast aside, the truest little heart that ever beat in a girl's bosom.

Poor Junie! how was she to know the handsome, prince-

ly young man (the exact counterpart of handsome Harry, who had wooed and won her) was his cruel twin brother?

Oh, if the young husband had only mentioned the existence of a twin brother Henry, who was his cruelest, most relentless foe, how much untold misery might have been spared those two bleeding hearts! how many bitter mistakes might easily have been set straight!

Poor little Junie believed him to be Harry, whom she, despite all the cruelty she had suffered, loved so madly still, and the sight of her rival's triumph nearly cost the poor, wretched, forsaken little bride her reason.

"Was God no mercy, that I am so sorely tried?" she sobbed out, bitterly, dashing wildly from the car. "All the good things of this life are showered recklessly upon the banker's beautiful, proud daughter. Why couldn't God have spared me my love? He was my world, and I loved him so!"

Junie crossed the road, little caring, little heeding which way she went. Even all fear of Squire Granger pursuing her was completely obliterated from her mind by the cruel sight she had just witnessed.

When she reached the pavement she stood for a moment irresolute, wondering which way she should go. Fate decided the question for her.

But a few paces from her a tall, stately gentleman and a very stylish lady were just entering a coach; and upon the pavement, utterly refusing to allow her maid to touch her, stood a beautiful, willful, richly dressed child of some five or six summers, with a gayly painted balloon in one hand and an exquisite wax doll in the other.

"Do let me put you into the coach with your papa and your mamma," coaxed the maid. "You shall fly your balloon out in the grounds, after we get home, as much as you please, Miss Vic; and it shall have a nice long string to it, too."

"You can't coax me. I won't get into the coach where

she is!" cried the child, stamping angrily and glancing defiantly at the beautifully dressed lady seated beside her father, who sat back in the coach white with suppressed anger under her mask of smiles. "She's not my mamma!" cried the child; "she's only my step-ma. They have put my own pretty mamma in the cold ground, and I don't like this one. She's not kind, like my own mamma was."

"Victorine," called her father, sternly, "get into the coach instantly. I must not neglect to punish you for this to-night."

"Then I shall not go home at all!" cried the child. "Go home by yourselves, and I will stay here and fly my balloon."

She broke away from her maid's detaining hand as she spoke, darting close up to the spot where Junie stood, taking refuge behind her, whispering, eagerly:

"Don't let that horrid maid catch me. I want to stay here and fly my balloon."

The French maid hurried after her willful charge with an angry, flushed face, pushing Junie rudely aside; but the child, recklessly bent upon eluding her, fled like a young fawn out into the road, just as a spirited team of mettlesome horses dashed rapidly up to the pavement, foaming at the mouth and clearly beyond control of their terrified driver.

Terrified shrieks of women and children rent the air, mingled with the groans of men, as the spectators saw at a glance, before mortal aid could reach the child, she would be dashed to death beneath the hoofs of the maddened steeds.

In a single instant Junie saw the child's deadly peril, and, with a startled cry, the beautiful, golden-haired young girl cleared the space which divided her from the child at a single mad leap, grasped her by the skirts, flinging her

aside just as the unmanageable steeds plunged wildly above her.

Those who witnessed that horrible scene held their breath in the wildest terror. Women fainted, and men seemed powerless to avert the terrible doom of the lovely young girl who had so bravely faced death to save the child.

The whole occurrence had occupied but one short moment; but it seemed to the by-standers who had witnessed it as if a life-time of horror were crowded into that brief moment.

"Oh, Victorine! my darling! my baby!" cried the horror-stricken father, clasping his child, who had been so miraculously snatched from the jaws of death, wildly to his heart. "Saved! saved! saved!" Then he made his way, with the tears running down his cheeks, to the noble young girl to whom his child owed her precious life.

Junie was just returning to consciousness, and a smile, which faded an instant after, crept into her lovely blue eyes as she saw the child, unhurt, clasped in his arms.

"I wanted to save her," she sobbed, pitifully, "but I wanted to die. Why did God save me, when the one prayer of my heart was to die—only to die?"

Mr. Markham, with little Vic still clasped in his arms, bent over the rescuer of his little one in surprise.

"Those are strange words to hear from young lips," he said, kindly. "You are scarcely more than a child—not much more than sixteen, I should judge, and with beauty rarely seen even among beautiful young girls—why, then, should life have been so hard and bitter with you that your one prayer is to die, and leave so bright and beautiful a world?"

Junie shook her golden head sorrowfully, and the dewy crimson lips quivered pitifully as she answered, oh, so sadly:

"The world is not beautiful to me, sir; it has narrowed down to a grave; there is no room for me in it."

"Where is your home?" asked Mr. Markham, abruptly, brushing back the tear-drops from his sympathetic eyes.

She had forfeited all right to call the dear old farmhouse home, when she fled from its shelter with her false, cruel love, she told herself bitterly, and she answered, with a little tearless sob that went straight to Mr. Markham's tender heart, "I have no home. I am cast adrift on the cold, cruel world!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"No home—cast adrift on the world!" repeated Mr. Markham, gazing with deep emotion on the beautiful childish face before him, so fair and so innocent. "The rescuer of my little Vic shall never have cause to say that again," he cried, warmly. "Henceforth your home shall be with us. You shall be treated as though you were my own daughter. The gratitude of a life-time can not equal the great service you have this day rendered me. Do not hesitate," he said, eagerly, noticing that Junie wavered. "I shall accept no other answer."

"Do come," cried little Vic, slipping down from her father's arms and adding her entreaties to his. "I want you so much."

"Then I will come," said Junie, much to Mr. Markham's and Vic's delight.

He led her to the coach in which his wife sat a breathless spectator of the whole scene.

She held out her arms to Vic, murmuring, sweetly:

"Oh, dear, dear little darling Vic, you have given me such a fright!"

But little Vic shrunk from her, utterly ignoring her appeal, clinging all the closer to her new-found friend.

"How am I to thank you for your heroic bravery?" she

cried, turning to Junie. "I can only echo my husband's sentiments in saying our gratitude is too great to be expressed in words."

She kissed Junie as she spoke, but the kiss had no warmth in it, neither had the faint pressure of her dainty gloved fingers.

"What is your name, my dear?" she asked, scrutinizing narrowly the lovely flushed face that drooped bashfully beneath her keen gaze.

For one brief instant the name Junie Granger was on her lips, but with a little dreary sigh she remembered Harry had said the marriage she had so truly believed in was false, and she had no right to bear his name, and she answered, simply, "Junie Dean."

Mr. Markham, genial, warm-hearted gentleman that he was, scorning all deceit himself, never dreamed but that his wife's cordial welcome of the stranger who had saved her little step-daughter's life was most sincere and heart-felt.

"I hate her—hate her!" Mrs. Markham was thinking bitterly to herself. "She could have done me no greater injury than by saving the life of that despicable child, who stands between me and a fortune. A home with us, indeed! Does Ralph Markham think me a fool to suffer such an arrangement when I have sisters of my own? I shall take care that her stay beneath our roof shall be short!"

"My wife has two sisters living with us, whom you will find capital companions," said Mr. Markham, pleasantly—"Irene and Dolly Carleton. Irene is rather dark, haughty, and dignified. Dolly resembles you somewhat, but her hair is less golden and her eyes less blue."

Mrs. Markham flushed with mortification at hearing her husband openly express the opinion that this young stranger was handsomer than her own sisters, and she meant to make him pay dearly for that speech. "He is setting her up above them already!" she thought, bitterly.

The sun sunk in the west, and the little stars peeped out from the dark folded curtains of night as the coach rolled rapidly along, stopping at length before a magnificent residence in one of the most fashionable portions of the city.

The footman threw open the door, and Mr. Markham sprang quickly out, with little Vic still in his arms, followed by his wife and Junie.

"I shall call you 'Junie,'" said Mr. Markham, pleasantly, "for I wish you to feel entirely at home with us."

"Thank you, sir," murmured Junie, timidly.

"I think you had better show her to her room yourself, Celia, dear," he said, turning to his wife; "so much excitement as she has just passed through should be followed by a good night's rest. She can make the acquaintance of the girls and Arthur in the morning."

"That would be a very suitable arrangement," smiled Mrs. Markham, sweetly. "I will show her to the pretty little blue-and-gold room near Vic's myself, at once. Come, my dear."

Junie followed her up the wide stairway and down the long, velvet-carpeted corridor, thinking she had never seen anything one half so beautiful as this stately home.

If Junie had been more worldly wise she would have noticed how the mask of smiles slipped away from haughty Mrs. Markham's face the moment her husband turned his back.

"There," said Mrs. Markham, pushing open a door of an exquisite apartment at the extreme end of the corridor, and turning up the gas-jet without deigning another glance at the timid young girl beside her, "this will be your room for the present, until I can make some other arrangement;" and, with a cold bow strangely at variance with her sweet smiles of a few moments since, she glided from the room.

"I wish I had not yielded to Mr. Markham's and little

Vic's entreaties to come home with them," she thought, "for I am sure Mrs. Markham does not like it. I must go away from this beautiful home."

Mrs. Markham fairly flew along the corridor toward the magnificent suite of rooms her two younger sisters occupied.

She flung open the door of their boudoir with a harsh laugh as she strode into their presence and flung herself down on a cushioned chair opposite them.

"What can be the matter now, Celia?" cried Irene Carleton, raising her dark eyes frowningly to her married sister's face. "Have you and that miserable old man of yours quarreled again, or has he cut down your pin money?"

"More likely he has quarreled with her about the expense of having us here," cried Dolly Carleton, spitefully, as she eagerly scanned Mrs. Markham's impenetrable face with her pale, steel-blue eyes.

"It's neither the one nor the other," retorted Mrs. Markham, shortly. "It is much worse than that. A fortune has just been dashed from my hands to-day; and, to make matters all the worse, that miserable old fool has brought a young and beautiful girl to live in this house, to shine you both down."

Both the blonde and brunette jumped to their feet in amazement, giving vent to exclamations of the most intense surprise.

In secret, the three amiable sisters always designated the kind, genial millionaire, who had condescended to marry Celia, their eldest sister, who had occupied the position of governess to little Vic, as the old fool.

But in company Mr. Markham was always spoken of as "My dear, kind brother-in-law."

In a few brief words Mrs. Markham rapidly related the occurrence which had just transpired; adding, in conclusion: "If that miserable child had but died I would have

been heir to my husband's wealth. When she becomes of age, if her father were to die before that time, we would all be thrust out penniless into the street, except for the miserable widow's dower which would come to me."

"I shall never forgive that girl for saving her miserable little life," flashed out Irene, her ebony eyes blazing wrathfully.

"Nor shall I," blazed Dolly. "I shall take pains to snub her so effectually, she won't care to stay here long!"

"You must both be very amiable to her before Mr. Markham," commanded the diplomatic Celia. "Remember, you are both living here on his bounty, and he has taken an unusual fancy to this girl."

"We are not likely to forget it," replied Irene, bitterly; "and if we could marry well, we would soon shake the dust of this house from our feet. What is this girl's name, and what does she look like?"

"She is small and *petite*," answered Mrs. Markham, slowly, "with a pink-and-white baby face, and great, large, innocent, velvety blue eyes, like a guileless child's, scarlet lips that would stir the blood in any young man's heart, and a great cloud of fluffy, golden curls, such as poets and painters rave over, and her name is the very music of romantic poetry—Junie Dean."

"A blonde, is she?" cried Dolly, pale to the lips.

"Not a pale blonde like you are," replied Celia, angrily, "but a golden blonde of the rarest type, and a beauty. You shall both see her in the morning, and I warn you to be exceedingly affable toward her before Mr. Markham. You know how obstinate he is; and if he sees you receive her coldly he will endeavor to make up in kindness your want of courtesy. What she did for Vic will make her the greatest heroine living in his eyes."

"Arthur will see her, and perhaps fall in love with her," said Irene Carleton, slowly; "but let her beware, if she dare come between us."

"You are not engaged to Arthur yet?" asked Mrs. Markham, interrogatively.

"No," answered Irene, flushing redly, "but I am pushing matters as fast as I can; from utter indifference I have at last awakened his interest, and now, if no new attractive face drifts across his dreams, it will only be a question of time as to when he will propose marriage to me."

"It is very unlucky this pretty stranger should come along just now," admitted Mrs. Markham, hesitatingly; "still, as I said before, we must make the best of it."

"If she had only come here as a nurse, or a governess, or a sewing-girl," groaned Dolly, kicking viciously at an adjacent hassock; "but as an equal of ours, and a heroine, to reign a queen down in the parlor when our company comes—the very idea of it is quite too horrible."

"If Arthur shows any preference for her it will be a dark, memorable day to her when she first crossed my path," exclaimed Irene, speaking the words hissing and slowly, as though she were registering a solemn vow. And poor little Junie, sleeping so peacefully under that roof, little dreamed of the new foes plotting so darkly against her—the cruelest plot of all.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE sun was scarcely up the next morning ere little Vic presented herself at Junie's door.

Junie had always been used to early rising on the farm, and little Victorine was delighted to find her up and dressed, standing at the window.

"I dreamed about you all last night," cried the child, impulsively springing into her arms, and caressing Junie's long golden curls with her chubby little hands. "I have been telling Arthur all about you for the last hour," she added, breathlessly, "and he's awfully anxious to see you."

"Is Arthur your little brother?" asked Junie, kissing the beautiful, eager little face.

"Arthur, my brother! Oh, dear, no!" laughed the child, "he is papa's cousin; and a great big young man, with a mustache and horses and hunting dogs—all his own. I call him Cousin Arthur, too; he's awful nice. But won't you come down into the garden," urged the child, "and see all my pretty flowers? I have so many things to show you."

Junie caught up her sun-hat and followed the child out into the garden, that seemed like a fairy world of bloom and perfume to the simple little country lassie who had been lost in admiration of the modest violets and daisies that grew on the Kentucky hills, or the scarlet poppies glowing among the wheat.

"Wait for me here," said the child, as they reached a veritable fairy's bower of blossoms, which was called Victorine's own, "and I will go and fetch the beautiful wax dolly Cousin Arthur bought me. It has just such blue eyes as you have, but not quite such nice golden curls." Victorine darted away toward the house, leaving Junie alone in the bower.

The moments flitted quickly past, and after half an hour or more had passed, Junie began to wonder if little Vic had forgotten her errand or if something had detained her.

She parted the net-work of crimson blossoms with her small white hand, gazing anxiously down the shaded, graveled path, then drew back with a little startled cry.

A young man, walking briskly up the graveled walk, humming a few bars of a popular opera in a rich, musical voice, stopped short, gazing in astonished delight at the beautiful young face peeping so shyly out at him from the picturesque net-work of crimson blossoms, which almost instantly disappeared.

"Can that exquisite face belong to some newly arrived

visitor?" he thought; "or could it possibly belong to the heroine little Vic is raving so wildly about? Yes, it must be."

Determined to probe the mystery at once, and, at the same time, to catch another glimpse of the bewitching face, without further ado Arthur Seymour stepped boldly up to the arbor.

A pretty little creature in a white lawn dress started abruptly to her feet from the rustic bench on which she had been seated, raising a pair of wonderful, startled blue eyes bashfully to his face.

"I beg your pardon for intruding upon you," he said, sagerly, "but is this Miss Junie Dean?"

"Yes, sir," she murmured, in evident embarrassment.

"You must permit me, Miss Junie, to add my most sincere thanks with those of the rest of the family for your heroic rescue of little Vic," he said, extending his hand and clasping hers in a frank, manly way that put Junie completely at her ease with him directly, and gave him an excellent opportunity of lingering there and talking with her.

"Please do not mention it," said Junie, flushing as deep a crimson as the roses around her. "I only did my duty."

"But you imperiled your own life, they tell me," he answered, earnestly; "it was hardly natural to do that, even for duty's sake." He saw the beautiful pink flush die out of the girl's cheeks, leaving them as pale as white roses, but she made him no reply.

They had told him, too, how bitterly she had prayed for death, and he wondered greatly at it as he glanced at the lovely, childish, half-averted face.

"We shall always do everything in our power to make your life here very, very happy," he said, kindly, seating himself down on the grass almost at her feet in a boyish

fashion, not daring to ask permission to occupy the seat on the coveted bench by her side.

"Thank you, sir," replied Junie, bashfully, as she arose to leave him. "I think I shall have to go back to the house now to see what has detained little Miss Vic."

"Why, I beg a thousand pardons!" cried Arthur, springing to his feet, and flushing in consternation. "Little Vic gave me a message for some one I should find in the arbor, and I quite forgot to deliver it; and that message was," he continued, laughingly, "that you should come to your room at once, for she had taken her playthings up there to show you."

Junie laughed and blushed, and Arthur joined heartily, thinking to himself one glance at a face like that was enough to make any young fellow lose his heart, as well as his thoughts, and he admitted to himself she was dangerously bewitching.

"You must not make a recluse of yourself, Miss Junie," he said, eagerly. "There is always quite a jolly crowd of young folks here, and I wish the honor and distinction of introducing our wonderful little heroine into our set as soon as possible. I must pave the way by introducing myself now, which I have neglected to do before. I am Arthur Seymour, Mr. Markham's cousin."

"You are very kind, sir," stammered Junie, retreating toward the entrance, "and I am very grateful; but I am not used to society. I should be out of place in it, for I am only a farmer's daughter, and—and the people of your class do not care for any one who is not—wealthy and accomplished."

She turned and fled from him as she uttered the last words, leaving him standing there gazing after her in dumfounded amazement, with the intent gaze of one who was charmed.

"Only a farmer's daughter," he breathed, half aloud.
"Ah! what city belle in the wide wide world could com-

pare with such bashful, girlish modesty and exquisite beauty?"

She had all the gifts the gods bestow—beauty a queen might envy, grace and charming simplicity—and that was all that was needful for a young girl to possess to win, at first glance, the hearts of just such impulsive young fellows as Arthur Seymour.

"Heavens, what wonderful eyes!" he thought, feeling a strange, subtle sensation thrilling in his heart; "large, blue, and innocent, like the heart of a forget-me-not. I was just thinking of leaving; life was too lame for me here; now I think I shall stay."

Junie hurried back through the brilliant foliage, and through the long conservatories, where the golden bells of the rare tropical flowers nodded a welcome to her as she passed them hurriedly by.

"What right have I to mingle in a society which Heaven has not fitted me for?" she thought, bitterly, to herself. "I am neither wealthy, nor accomplished; if I had been—oh, if I only had been like the haughty banker's daughter, perhaps Harry might have loved me as he loves her."

She flitted through the brilliant sunshine, little dreaming of the fascinated pair of eyes following her so admiringly from the bower of roses she had just quitted.

In the corridor she met Mr. Markham.

"Good-morning, Junie," he said, greeting her warmly and heartily. "You have been out among the flowers, I see; that is right. I shall be very pleased to see you make yourself perfectly at home with us."

His greeting was so honest and sincere the tears sprang to Junie's eyes.

"Come into the morning-room," he said; "my wife and her two sisters are there, and after introducing you to the girls we will go into breakfast, where we shall probably find my cousin, Mr. Arthur Seymour, and little Vic, awaiting us."

He drew her trembling little hand within his arm as he spoke, and led her into the pretty morning-room, where his wife and her two sisters awaited them.

"Good-morning, Junie, my dear," said Mrs. Markham, sweetly, kissing her with a great show of tenderness; then she turned to a tall, dark, haughty young girl on her right: "Irene, love, this is Junie, the little heroine of whom I have told you."

Irene Carleton, the haughty brunette, knowing that her brother-in-law's eyes were regarding her keenly, swept over to where Junie stood, and touched her rosy cheek with her icy lips—a kiss that made little Junie almost recoil. Dolly Carleton, like her two diplomatic sisters, did her best to welcome the timid young stranger, whom she hated at first glance.

"If Arthur were only here, the introductions to the members of our family would be complete," said Mr. Markham, genially.

"Arthur is here," said a deep, musical voice from the door-way, and Arthur himself stepped gracefully into the room, adding, laughingly: "You need not take the trouble to introduce Miss Junie and myself, for we have met before, and are, I trust, firm friends."

Junie raised her blushing face, glancing timidly up, to meet the warm, admiring gaze of her hero of an hour ago.

The roses Irene Carleton held in her jeweled hands dropped on the velvet carpet unheeded, and her dark, haughty face paled to the dead-white shade of the merino morning-dress she wore.

She raised her dark, gleaming eyes, and glanced carelessly over Junie's golden head to her two sisters, and in that look, telegraphed between the sisters, they read the meaning of the cruel smile that hovered around Irene Carleton's lips—Junie Dean and her handsome lover had met before and were firm friends. and that it would be a

bitter, relentless war between them as to which should win him.

"Come," said Mrs. Markham, leading the way to the breakfast-room; and the terrible jealousy of Irene took deeper root as she noticed that Arthur kept as near little Junie as possible; and any one could plainly read the admiration expressed in his handsome face.

CHAPTER XIX.

AFTER breakfast, Irene and Dolly took complete charge of Junie, carrying her off to their apartments, much to Arthur's annoyance and disappointment.

"What do you think of our protégée, Arthur?" asked Mrs. Markham, after the three young girls had quitted the room.

"Think of her!" exclaimed Arthur Seymour, taking a hasty turn up and down the length of the room, and tossing back the brown, waving hair from his broad brow with his slim, white hand. "Why, I think she is certainly the most charming young girl I have ever met."

Mrs. Markham laughed uneasily, and there was something in that subtle, jarring laugh that made Arthur suddenly stop short and ask, hesitatingly:

"Don't you think so?"

"I would rather not express an opinion upon the subject," she replied, with a well-assumed, embarrassed air.

Arthur regarded her for a moment curiously.

"There is but one construction to put upon your words, Mrs. Markham," he said, his boyish face flushing slightly. "When one lady refuses to give an opinion of another, we generally infer she is not favorably impressed with the lady in question. Is it not so?"

"Yes," admitted Mrs. Markham, with apparent candor; "and since you have so cleverly guessed it, I may as well admit the plain truth. While I am deeply grateful for the

service she rendered Vic, I question the propriety of admitting her into our household as one of the family, when I remember she was actually picked up from the streets, a houseless, homeless creature, with a history, perhaps, that would not bear investigation."

"You only surmise this," said Arthur, hastily. "If a face is any index to character, I certainly believe little Junie Dean to be above reproach."

"Gentlemen always have that idea when the girl under discussion is young and has a pretty face," replied Mrs. Markham, curling her lip scornfully.

"Perhaps she has had some deep sorrow which has driven her from home—cruel parents, or perhaps a step-mother," added Arthur, maliciously, a merry twinkle in his dark-brown eyes, as he saw the arrow had struck home.

Mrs. Markham shook her head, flushing redly.

"I can not imagine anything short of some terrible disgrace, or something of that kind, that would drive an innocent young girl from the shelter of the home roof," she remarked, with great emphasis.

"She has told me she is a farmer's daughter," replied Arthur, uneasily. "I can readily comprehend what such a dull, prosy life must be to a young, bright girl like that; and I am inclined to think she may have run away to see what gayety could be found in the gay world beyond those dull home limits."

"I shall try to think as well of her as I possibly can," said Mrs. Markham, sweetly, "and I trust your opinion of her may be correct." She sailed out of the room as she spoke, leaving Arthur to his own reflections.

"He is in love with that girl already," was her mental comment. "There will be a bitter war between her and Irene, but Irene shall win him. His wealth is well worth striving for. When I married Mr. Markham, and found out he had a single young cousin—a millionaire—how I planned and plotted to set him here, trusting to either

Irene or Dolly to capture him! And now must this baby-faced stranger step in and grasp the golden prize under our very eyes? No! a thousand times no!—she shall never dash a second fortune away from us! I swear it!”

Mrs. Markham thought she had planted the seeds of suspicion against Junie in Arthur Seymour's heart which must surely take root.

But when a young man is in love, all the warnings in the world fall heedless upon his ears. The love of youth is obstinate; it outweighs all things. All faults in the one beloved seem artless graces, glossed over by the sweet, absorbing passion of love's glamour.

As anxious as Arthur was to herald Junie's bravery to the world, and introduce her among his friends, it was quite laughable to note, in his own mind, he selected those who had sweethearts already, feeling quite secure in the belief none of them would be likely to transfer their affections to Junie.

“Will you come to our room?” asked Dolly, as the three girls left the breakfast-room. “It is delightfully cool up there, and we can have a splendid chat, and get better acquainted.”

“I should like to write a letter first,” said Junie, hesitatingly. “After that I should be very pleased to come.”

“A letter to some lover?” said Irene, glancing strangely at the young girl from beneath her long lashes, with a sudden gleam of hope in her dark, restless eyes.

“No,” said Junie, simply, paling as white as a snow-drop. “I have no lover.”

“That is what Irene always says; but every one knows that Arthur is her lover. Yet the pair are too bashful to admit it,” laughed Dolly, thinking the opportunity just presented to claim Arthur as her sister's lover must not be lost.

“Where did you meet Arthur before?” asked Irene, striving to speak calmly.

Then Junie explained the occurrence in the rose-bower, and the two sisters exchanged meaning glances, while Irene muttered, between her set teeth, "That miserable, mischievous Vic must have sent him there on purpose."

"You will come to us as soon as you finish your letter?" persisted Dolly. "But don't bring Vic. That child has an awful tongue, and magnifies every word she hears us speak."

Junie sped quickly up to her room, and her letter was soon commenced.

"SISTER FANNY.—Please read my letter through to the end, and if you can not forgive, at least pity your poor, unhappy little sister Junie. You wished all kinds of vengeance upon my head for stealing from you your handsome lover; and oh, Fanny, it has all come down upon me more cruelly than you could even have wished! No girl ever paid such a penalty for her reckless folly as I have. He whom I loved cast me off without one regret. Your revenge is complete, for my life is a wreck. He has left me to my fate, coolly telling me, face to face, he had purposely deceived me. Ask father and mother to forgive me, Fanny. Tell them I am changed from the heedless, reckless, romping child they used to have to scold into subjection. My spirit is utterly crushed out. You were very angry with me, Fanny, but let the past be buried between us; and if he should ever repent for the wrong he has done me, and come back to the farm to search for me, tell him that I am dead, Fanny. It will not be an untruth; for I could never be more dead to him, not even if I were in my grave, than I am now.

"I wish I could come home again. If you will take me back, and not reproach me for my folly, write to me here, and I will come at once. I have just money enough to reach there. Your heart-broken

"JUNIE."

Many a tear plashed down on the page as she wrote, and nearly obliterated the words; but Junie never stopped to notice it; she hastily sealed and directed the letter, placing it in the mail-bag which lay upon the table in the lower corridor.

When she returned to the room where she had left the two sisters, she found only Dolly there, who flushed guiltily as she made some laughing excuse for Irene's absence.

Junie did not see the dark, jealous eyes that were steadily watching her every movement as she placed the letter in the bag, then turned and swiftly retraced her steps.

"I might as well know who her correspondent is," said Irene Carleton, gliding stealthily forward.

In a moment Junie's letter was in her hand.

"Why should I not know the contents of this letter?" she muttered, hoarsely. "Perhaps it holds some secret revelation—some hidden secret—whereby I can teach Arthur Seymour to distrust and despise her pretty pink-and-white baby face!"

She glanced guiltily around. No one was within sight, and, quick as thought, she thrust it into her bosom.

"No one will know—no one has witnessed what I have done!" she panted. "Young girls have done more desperate things than this in love's warfare to crush a rival," she cried, to stifle the stings of accusing conscience. And the treacherous, beautiful plotter sped swiftly back to her room, carrying with her the letter which was destined to play such a peculiar part in Junie's romantic future.

After taking the precaution to lock her door, to prevent any possible intrusion, with an exultant smile on her haughty lips, as she seated herself in a luxurious easy-chair, and with a hand that trembled slightly in spite of her forced composure, she drew forth the letter little Junie had written, and unhesitatingly broke the seal.

"Ha!" she muttered, hoarsely, as her black, gleaming eyes hurriedly glanced over the tear-blotted page, "I

knew it! I was sure of it! There is a secret mystery connected with her—a mystery I would give everything on earth that I have to possess the knowledge of. I will keep this letter; it is worth untold gold to me. If I find that Arthur Seymour's mad infatuation for her pretty pink-and-white face and baby ways deepen into love, I will boldly taunt her with the shame of her past life, and openly denounce her; and, if it comes to that, her own letter shall convict her!"

At that moment she heard the sound of carriage wheels below, and parting the silken curtains and glancing down, she saw Arthur Seymour in his handsome, stylish turnout and prancing, mettlesome bays ready for a drive.

"He will ask for me," she thought, with a beating heart.

But no. Listening intently, she heard him say to one of the servants:

"Give my compliments to Miss Junie, and ask her if she would like a drive with me. Don't be long, Jim; these horses of mine are rather impatient."

CHAPTER XX.

JUNIE and Dolly were sitting in a pretty little room adjoining the library when the servant delivered his message.

"Mr. Seymour wishes Junie to ride with him!" said Dolly, flushing hotly. "Are you sure, Jim, you have not made a mistake? It is very strange my sister Irene's engaged husband should wish to drive other young ladies out."

"There's no mistake," grinned Jim, showing his ivories. "Master Arthur said Miss Junie, sure 'nuff."

"Tell Mr. Seymour that I am much obliged to him for his kindness, but I can not go," said Junie.

A quick, light step was heard in the corridor without.

and Arthur himself appeared in the door-way just in time to hear the last sentence.

"Miss Junie," he said, bowing and smiling, as he advanced into the room, with hat in one hand and riding-whip in the other, "I anticipated a refusal, and I am here to plead my cause myself. Miss Dolly," he said, turning to Irene's sister, laughingly, "you must persuade Miss Junie to accompany me this beautiful sunshiny afternoon. There will be plenty of time for the delicious chats you young girls are so fond of when she returns."

"I'm sure she may do as she pleases," returned Dolly, stiffly. "She probably knows whether she wants to go or not."

"I have heard that young ladies delight in being coaxed," Arthur responded, with perfect good humor, "and I am sure Miss Junie can not hold out long against me, for I am determined that she shall come."

Playfully, yet with a strong resolve underlying it, Arthur picked up Junie's hat which lay on the table, and, with a dexterous movement, contrived to place it jauntily upon her curls.

"We will stand not upon the order of our going," he cried, gayly, slipping her little white hand within his arm, and fairly compelling her to accompany him.

"Now they will dislike me all the more for this," thought luckless Junie, casting a backward glance at Dolly's frowning face.

"You must consent to drive with me every day," declared Arthur, placing her in the carriage and taking a place beside her; "to tell you the truth, I purchased these bays this very morning for that purpose and no other. What is the matter?" he said, glancing down at her crimson, dismayed face. "Are you making up your mind to refuse me that pleasure?"

"Yes," replied frank little Junie, turning away from

the admiring eyes that were regarding her so steadfastly, "I have made up my mind not to go out."

"Why?" asked the young man, in astonishment.

"Because it is not proper to ride with any one else's engaged lover," responded Junie, promptly.

"As much as to infer that I am some one's 'engaged lover,' as you phrase it," laughed Arthur Seymour, gayly; "but you must believe me when I emphatically deny the soft impeachment," he added, with sudden gravity.

For some minutes a deep silence fell between them, which was broken at last by Arthur.

"I can not imagine what gave rise to such a nonsensical report as that," he said, impatiently. "I heard something of the kind once from Vic, but considered it only a child's mistaken fancy. Who was it that told you such a tale, Miss Junie?"

"Perhaps it was little Vic," she answered, evasively. "I paid so little attention to it at the time I can not even remember my informant."

"I can imagine that the subject possessed little interest for you, one way or the other," he said, biting his lip vexedly, and applying the whip to his mettlesome horses.

"Oh, please don't!" cried Junie in terror, clinging to his arm in the most abject fear, as the bays fairly flew over the road.

"Don't be afraid," he said, tenderly, laying one of his firm, white hands reassuringly on the two trembling mites of hands that clung to his coat sleeve. "I will take care of you. I would shield you with my very life from danger."

She never even heard the last tenderly whispered sentence, she was thinking so anxiously of Irene's and Dolly's anger.

How was she to know that he had applied the whip to his mettlesome steeds on purpose to have her cling to him, just as she had done, for one brief moment?

"Won't you please take me home, Mr. Seymour?" she asked, drawing a long breath, as the bays slackened their pace.

"Forgive me for frightening you so; you have not enjoyed your ride," he said, apologetically. "And I will turn about at once, on condition that you will promise to ride with me very often!"

"I will think about it," replied Junie. "I can not promise."

"She says that, like all the rest of her coquettish sex, to make me the more anxious," he thought, smiling slyly under his drooping mustache.

He felt strangely attracted toward Junie. All the night before a pretty, girlish, dimpled face, framed in rings of golden hair, had floated through his dreams, and he had actually counted the hours the next morning until he should see her at breakfast.

Irene Carleton had watched them drive away with a heart fairly bursting with mortification and bitter anger.

"I see how it will all end," she cried, pacing up and down the room with the fury of a tigress. "He will love her; and if he does, I will kill her—yes, kill her with these white jeweled hands of mine before she shall win him from me. Hear me, high Heaven!" she cried, vehemently. "It will be war to the knife between us; and if she wins him from me, she shall surely die."

A moment later, Dolly was tapping at her door, wondering to find it so securely fastened.

"Let me in, Irene!" she cried, breathlessly; "I have something of great importance to tell you!"

"I know all that you would tell me," replied Irene Carleton, with haughty, bitter pride, as she flung the door wide open. "Don't humiliate me by referring to it. I saw all from the window."

"Not all," declared Dolly. "He was so much in love with her he actually followed the servant who delivered his

message, and pleaded his cause in person. He would not take No for an answer, and with the most lover-like devotion in the world actually placed her hat upon her head and led her away."

"Did he do that?" asked Irene, pale to the lips.

"Yes," replied Dolly, recklessly, "and actually hinted to me to beg her go with him."

Irene's lips moved, but no sound issued from them. Perhaps she was repeating her vow of vengeance, not loud, but cruelly deep.

"She is a dangerous rival," cried Dolly Carleton. "I wish we could get rid of her. You are good at plotting, Irene—can't you bring your powers to bear in this case?"

"I have thought of a plan already," replied Irene Carleton, bitterly.

"You have?" exclaimed Dolly, raising her eyebrows surprisedly. "What is it?"

"I have only the outlines as yet," replied Irene. "You must not be surprised at anything you may hear or see. Remember—

"The mills of the gods grind slowly,
But they grind exceeding fine.'"

At that moment, Mrs. Markham hurriedly entered the room.

"I suppose you both saw what a fool Arthur is making of himself," she said, grimly, glancing at the angry faces of her two sisters. "He has actually taken that little minx out for a drive. Something must be done at once, girls, I see that plainly," she cried, "or Arthur Seymour's money will never enrich any one in this family."

"Leave all that to me," answered Irene; "nothing must be said to him against her—that would only bind their friendship more closely together. He must learn to despise her. I think I know of a plan that will not fail me in bringing it about."

"If you were as clever in attracting a rich husband, instead of plotting and planning so much, it would be of more account," declared Mrs. Markham, crossly, tapping her slippered foot on the thick velvet carpet.

"I have not had a fair chance," retorted Irene, flushing redly. "I couldn't fly into Arthur Seymour's face and ask him to marry me, could I? Only last week I heard him say there was nothing on earth he disliked so much as to see a bold, forward girl. I have been on my guard ever since."

"Nonsense!" retorted Mrs. Markham, sharply. "When a young man is really charmed, or in love, rather, with a pretty girl, he loses sight of the fact that she is bold and forward; he calls her mischievous—like a playful kitten—and it never occurs to him the clever angel has done the best part of the wooing herself. It takes a sharp girl to make a rich man propose nowadays."

"I hope this Junie will not attract the rich young Kentuckian who is coming up here next week," said Mrs. Markham, slowly. "I had intended him for you, Dolly, and Arthur for your sister Irene. Mr. Markham is actually insane over this girl, and if he was not a married man already he would propose to her himself in no time. He actually intends to give a grand ball next week to introduce her into society. Just think of it, a beggar picked up from the streets. And he has bought her a set of diamonds as valuable as any of ours. My blood fairly boiled when he opened the case for my inspection; my fingers fairly ached to tear them from his hands and set my heel upon them."

"Why didn't you?" cried Dolly, wrathfully. "I would have done it without an instant's reflection."

"It wouldn't have been policy for me at that particular time, for I intend to ask him to-night for a check for five thousand dollars. I want to turn everything into cash that I can, for when he dies everything goes to Vic, you

know; but I don't intend there shall be much left by that time."

CHAPTER XXI.

THREE weeks had passed since the afternoon Junie had went for a drive with Arthur Seymour, and from that time she had persistently avoided him.

"I can not think what I could have possibly done to offend her!" he thought, minutely reviewing his every action and word. "But one thing I am determined upon," he soliloquized. "I shall see Junie at the garden-party to-night, and I may as well know my fate at once."

Love's sweet, bewildering dream had come to handsome Arthur Seymour all at once, and he realized how dark and empty his future would be if it were not brightened by Junie's love.

Mr. Markham heartily favored the idea, when Arthur, blushing like a bashful school-boy, proposed it.

"Just the *finale* I hoped for," he cried, warmly. "Little Junie is a jewel, but she will not be easily won. But then, my boy, the wooing of such a shy little creature is all the more delightful. You must not be discouraged with 'No' two or three times; remember 'faint heart never won fair lady,' " he said.

Arthur knew how fond all young girls were of anything bordering on the romantic, and, remembering this, he had sent her every morning a bouquet of the rarest roses, with a tiny note buried in its fragrant depths—notes which gradually grew more tender, in the sweet, subtle language of the poets.

He never dreamed but that these roses reached Junie. There was no one to tell him Irene Carleton cleverly intercepted them, crushing out the fragrant hearts of the flowers beneath her heels, and tearing the notes into a thousand shreds with her white, slim, jeweled fingers, as though

It were the tender heart of the innocent, unconscious girl who had stolen her handsome lover from her.

Arthur was too thorough a gentleman to refer to the flowers or the poetry, when chance threw Junie and he together.

He was too blindly in love to notice that Junie's blue eyes did not droop when he addressed her suddenly, or her dimpled cheeks deepen to a rosier hue. It never occurred to him she was wholly indifferent to him.

"The aim of the garden-party," as Mr. Markham had emphatically declared, "was to introduce his little heroine into society."

Irene and Dolly were fairly at a white heat over the affair.

"Let her queen it over us to-night," said Irene, with a strange smile. "It will be for the last time, if everything works right."

Up in her room Junie stood before the mirror putting the last touches to her simple costume.

"You must put on the diamonds," cried little Vic, toying with the shining gems in the crimson-velvet case. "You know papa bought them for that very purpose!"

"Your papa was more than kind to make me such a beautiful present," replied Junie, gazing wistfully at the sparkling treasures. "But I can not wear them, because I have promised to loan them to Irene."

"She has diamonds of her own, and plenty, too, without borrowing yours," declared the child, angrily. "She has just done that so you can't wear 'em. She's awfully tricky."

"They are more suitable for her than for me," returned Junie, with a muffled sob. "I was never intended for anything but a plain country girl; only those who are beautiful and gay should have wealth and love."

"You are very beautiful," persisted the child. "Papa and Arthur both say so, and every one else says so, too."

"Of what use is beauty," sighed Junie, more to herself than to little Vic, "if it will not bring you the love of the man whom you love? No cross is so heavy to bear as love unreturned."

"Did you ever love any one who did not love you?" asked Vic, with all a child's persistent curiosity.

Junie could never fathom the impulse that stole over her to make a confidante of little Vic, who could not begin to comprehend one half of what she said.

"Yes," replied Junie, in a low, sobbing voice, "I loved some one once so very dearly that I would have given my very life if it could have benefited him. He was my world. But he did not love me, because I was poor. He duped and deceived me, spoiling my whole life. Oh, little Vic, there is nothing under the blue sky so cruel as the knowledge that love has been given all in vain—all in vain!"

"But he must have loved you," persisted the child, stubbornly; "everybody must love you who knows you, you are so pretty and so good."

"No," said Junie, drearily, taking out the photograph which she always carried hidden in her bosom. "He loves a beautiful, wealthy heiress, and he is to marry her very soon now."

A sudden tap at the door interrupted them, and Junie had just time enough to restore the portrait to its snug hiding-place, when the door opened and Mrs. Markham glided into the room.

Both Irene and Dolly wore elaborate costumes, which had been purchased for this very occasion, and by adroit maneuvering Mrs. Markham had contrived to suggest to Junie that she should wear a plain white Swiss dress, which would be most suitable, according to the position she occupied in the family. "Mr. Markham will be raging with anger and mortification when he beholds the queen of the fête," she thought, maliciously. "It will be too late to change her costume after all of the guests have seen her.

She will look like a perfect dowdy in contrast with Irene and Dolly, and my triumph will be complete."

As she opened the door of Junie's room, she started back with a cry of mingled anger, disappointment, and astonishment at the bewildering vision of pretty girlhood that met her gaze. The plain, thin, white dress did not have even a ruffle or a frill to relieve the plainness of the skirt, which reached just below the ankles, revealing a pretty little foot incased in a tiny slipper that Cinderella herself might have worn. The dress was gathered at the waist by a plain blue belt. A cluster of pink natural rose-buds at the throat and belt made up the simple costume. Junie's glorious golden curls were looped back by a blue ribbon, but the soft, clinging love-locks had escaped from their confines, and curled childishly over her pretty white forehead. In all her simplicity she was a picture that would have delighted a beauty-loving artist.

"I have made the grand mistake of my life," thought Mrs. Markham, fairly livid with envy, as she realized the striking truth of the words:

"Beauty unadorned is adorned the most."

"The girl looks as if she had stepped down from some picture-frame. Irene and Dolly will look fussy and overdressed beside her."

"Mr. Markham is waiting for you below," she said, chillingly, as she glided across the room, "and Irene is waiting for the diamonds. Here, Vic, my dear," she continued, turning to the child, who sat scowling at her from the hassock, "run and take this case to Irene's room, quick."

"My own mamma never asked me to do errands," replied little Vic, angrily, kicking at the roses in the carpet with the heels of her slippers. "I shall not go near Irene; let her come after them herself if she wants them."

"I shall have to break that child's temper with an iron

rod," she muttered, hoarsely, as she snatched the casket from the child's hand and hurriedly left the room.

Another moment and there was another summons from Mr. Markham, who was impatiently waiting below.

The garden was ablaze with electric lights and flaming banners; bright-hued bunting was wound around the trees, and twisted into fantastic arches here and there, making the scene an unusually unique and brilliant one, in the dazzling gleam of the colored lamps.

Irene and Dolly stood together beneath a floral bell of roses, welcoming the guests and doing the honors with determined looks on their faces, that plainly meant they did not mean to resign the honors which they had striven so hard to gain.

There was a great flutter among the guests to see the pretty little heroine, who had saved Mr. Markham's little child at the risk of her own life, and expectancy was at its height as Mr. Markham was seen approaching with a slight, childish, shrinking form clinging timidly to his arm.

There was a low hum of hushed admiration as the guests crowded around to be presented.

Mr. Markham smiled approvingly. Junie was a success; her popularity was assured. Praises of her lovely, childish beauty were on every lip.

"You must give me the first waltz, Junie," Arthur Seymour whispered. The poor fellow's voice fairly trembled as he made the request. Junie must have been blind, not to have read the love which was written upon his flushed, eager face.

To Junie that waltz was full of the bitterest pain—it brought too vividly back to her that June night when she had met Harry Granger down at the foot of the lane, and accompanied him to the squire's party, through a spirit of girlish, thoughtless mischief, thinking "what fun it would be to steal a march on her sister Fanny, who sat dressed in

all her finery waiting for the squire's handsome nephew to come for her."

With the keenest paid she remembered that waltz with Harry—how his arms had been clasped around her through that mazy waltz, which she had wished could last forever—how the dark, handsome face had smiled down into hers, teaching her in those thrilling glances the first lesson of love.

"Take me away from the music and lights, Mr. Seymour," she murmured, with a little gasping sob. "Please take me away from the lights and the crash of the music. I—I—can't bear it."

"That was just the request I was about to make," declared Arthur, drawing the little trembling hand within his arm. "I will take you to the rose-bower where first we met. It may be the most lonely part of the grounds, yet it is the most beautiful and picturesque spot in all the world to me."

"Why?" asked Junie, raising her blue eyes to his agitated face.

He stopped short in the path, his handsome, manly face all aglow in the clear, bright moonlight, as he answered, with tremulous eloquence in his voice:

"Because it was there I first saw you, Junie, and in that first instantaneous glance I knew I had met my fate. I loved you."

CHAPTER XXII.

"FORGIVE me if I startled you," said Arthur, bowing his handsome, stately head nearer the golden one that was buried in her hands. "I felt that I must speak to you, or die."

"Don't, Mr. Seymour," gasped Junie, piteously, "don't speak to me so. I can not bear it. You must not love—indeed you must not."

"It is beyond the power of mortals to control the love that fills our hearts, little Junie. Love is fate; and I would not cease loving you were it even in my power to do so."

"I have no heart to give you, Mr. Seymour," Junie faltered, tremulously.

"Tell me this much at least," cried Arthur, pale to the very lips: "Do you love any one else, Junie? Have you a lover?"

She turned her face away from him as she answered:

"No."

How could she tell him that she was a forsaken creature cast adrift on the world, so cruelly deceived by the man she had loved and trusted so blindly.

"Then why can you not love me?" asked the ardent, impetuous young lover. "I want you for my own precious little wife, dear. Do not turn away from me, Junie," he cried. "Silence gives me hope. I am mad to love you so," he continued. "I love you with the whole strength of my soul, the whole fire of my heart. I love you so dearly that I would rather be slain by one word from your lips than be blessed by any other love."

"Oh, Mr. Seymour," she cried out, earnestly, "I can realize what unrequited love is like, but oh, believe me, I can never love you! I—am sorry—"

"You need not pity me," he said; "I want no pity. Death from your hands would be sweeter than life from another's. Do not play with my heart, Junie. I can not bear it. Be patient with me if I have startled you so suddenly that you have not had time to measure the depth of your own heart-love."

"He questioned not her love—

He only knew that he loved—her."

"There can never be any love between us. Oh, Mr. Seymour, it can not be. Be my friend, even if nothing more."

"I must be either your lover or nothing," cried Arthur, striving manfully to crush the bitter disappointment that filled his yearning heart. "Friendship," he then added, bitterly; "there can be no such thing when love has once entered the heart. Could I look into your eyes, feel the thrilling touch of your little hands, and simply crave your friendship? No, a thousand times no! If you favored a rival, think you, Junie, there could be any friendship between that rival and me? No, again! I should be his bitterest foe, were he my own brother. Such a deep, passionate love as mine is utterly selfish. No matter what the poets say, there can be no friendship where one of them at least loves as passionately and madly as I love you, Junie."

For a moment a deep silence fell between them, broken only by the breeze sighing among the roses of the bower as the leaves fell in a fragrant shower about them.

Junie was looking away over the trees, with a look upon her face that had never rested upon that lovely face before. Her silence revived his mad, surging hope, and, leaning nearer to her, he whispered, tenderly:

"Oh, would of this world I were king,

Surrounded by beauty and pride,

My heart at thy feet would I fling,

Crying: "Pray be my queen, be my bride!"

You are thinking it all over, Junie," he continued, eagerly; "I can see it in your face. I shall never give up the hope of winning you. Give me hope, Junie," he cried. "See, some one is coming this way. Answer me quickly, my darling. Call me Arthur—just once—I have lingered so to hear you call my name."

"It can not be, Arthur," she said, brokenly. "Hate me—pity me—learn to forget me. There is a deep, yawning gulf between us. I pity you; but oh! I can never—never love you."

Junie had expected sorrow, perhaps anger, but she was not prepared for that great, wordless despair.

The white, haggard face struck her with the keenest sorrow. The anguish that lay in the dark eyes startled her.

She had not thought of such sorrow as this. Years passing over him would not have changed him as this had done. She was terrified at the awful change in him.

"Mr. Seymour—Arthur," she cried in affright, putting out her little fluttering hands toward him, "oh! what have I done?"

"You have killed me, that is all, my darling," he said, in a voice husky with emotion. "I have seen strong men weep over a blighted love-dream, and I have laughed, and thought it the rankest folly; and now, Heaven help me! I know the bitter cost of every heart-pang."

Oh, how she sympathized with him! Their sorrow was one in common. She pitied him, oh, so sadly! but she had no love to give him.

"Let us go back to the lights and the music, Arthur," she said, gently.

He offered her his arm, and led her back to the gay, happy throng, among the lights and the bewildering music.

Mr. Markham smiled as he saw them coming up the path together. "It is all settled," he thought, "but I must withhold my congratulations until Arthur refers to the matter himself. He is a whole-souled young fellow, and his marriage shall be a grand affair."

"Ah, here you are at last!" he cried, advancing to meet them. "I shall scold you heartily, Arthur, for keeping Junie away from our guests so long."

Arthur made some inaudible reply, which Mr. Markham did not quite catch, as he relinquished Junie to his care.

"I must present you to some of the new arrivals," he said, leading her over to a group of young people whom Dolly Carleton was entertaining.

The merry group made way for them as they advanced.

A sudden, unaccountable faintness seemed to seize

Junie. Some one is talking to Dolly. The voice is strangely familiar, the shadows of the overarching trees do not reveal his face, and like one who is powerless to struggle against fate, Junie is led up to him.

Dolly Carleton shrugs her plump, white shoulders, and a sneering smile mars the beauty of her pale face as her eyes rest enviously upon Junie, and how strangely frightened and ill at ease she appears.

Another moment and Mr. Markham turns to the little figure leaning so heavily on his strong, protecting arm.

"Junie," he says, "allow me to present to you my young friend, Harry Granger, and to *you*, Harry, my protégée, Miss Junie Dean."

For one brief instant the faces, the trees, the lights, and the glittering stars in the blue sky seemed whirling confusedly about her. She catches her breath in a terrified cry, that dies away on her lips as she stands face to face with the man who had so cruelly deceived her, and—Heaven help her—the man whom she loved so blindly still.

The blow had been so sudden and so unexpected, Harry Granger starts back with a face as pale as death; and, at the change of posture the bright, pitiless moonlight falls clearly on his white, startled face. For one brief instant their eyes meet and their hands clasp; her chill, little, unresponsive fingers are cold as death, and they fall away from his clasp.

For one wild moment the thought flashes across her mind to fall down at his feet and cry out to him:

"Oh, Harry, my darling, my love—my love, take me back, for my heart is breaking! take me back to your heart, or I shall die!"

But she dashes the spell from her with a superhuman effort.

"Let me remember the foul wrong he has done me," she cries to her tortured heart. "Let me remember how he duped and deceived me, lured me on to

destruction by his dark, cruel beauty, and winning, tender voice; and let me remember, too, how he cast me off, mocking my agony, more cruel than death itself. Let me remember it, and steel my heart against him. Let me show him that the heart he trampled upon, with a smile upon his handsome, false lips, is not utterly broken."

The scene in the hotel comes back vividly before her. All the terrible pain and humiliation of it comes back to her as they face each other out in the pale, bright, radiant moonlight.

In a moment all the pride of her rebellious nature is aroused.

"He shall find that his desertion has not killed me," she muttered. "The Junie Dean whom he wooed and deserted is dead to him forever. I will show that I can scorn and loathe him, even as I have loved."

With a proud, haughty gesture that was wholly foreign to the pretty, fond little Junie, whom he had loved so well, Junie turned from him, joining the gay dancers.

Two bright spots burned upon her cheeks, and a restless fire leaped into the blue eyes that were shining like twinkling, burning stars. She smiles gayly right and left on the admirers she shrunk from and alighted but an hour ago.

Mr. Markham was delighted at the change in his little quiet Junie. Mrs. Markham and her two bitterly jealous sisters exchanged glances of intense consternation.

Dolly Carleton took full charge of the handsome Kentuckian, but ever and anon Harry Granger's eyes wandered over to Junie's direction, with a world of misery in them, crying out in bitter silence to himself:

"Heavens! what could have changed her like this. Am I mad, or do I dream?"

He catches his breath hard. His heart is too full for utterance. He makes strange replies to Dolly's pretty remarks, and his smiles are forced. Dolly smiles to herself, thinking he must have been snaffing champagne, and the

He leaps jealously into her flushed face as she notices, too, how his eyes follow little Junie Dean.

But Junie does not once look in his direction. She is forging the last link in the chain of fate.

Arthur Seymour stands moodily against a tree watching the change in little Junie with amazement.

Suddenly, Junie breaks away from her late companion in the dance and crosses over to him, places one little white, fluttering mite of a hand on his arm, and whispers, hurriedly, while she has the strength to do it:

"I—I—have changed my mind, Arthur. Take me—save me from myself. I am yours—if you—still want me!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

OVER the din of the clashing dance-music, the murmur of the fountain, the sighing of the wind among the trees, Arthur Seymour heard the bewildering words: "I—I have changed my mind, Arthur. I am yours—if you—still want me!"

A shrill little laugh, that sounded somehow like a sobbing cry, broke from Junie's red lips, but the impetuous young lover never thought of it, so great was his joy.

"Love you still!" cried Arthur, tremulously, as he caught her little white, cold hands in a passionate clasp. "Oh, my darling, my darling, you will never know how madly I love you! If each heart-throb could speak, [it would tell its own eloquent story, that I would live for you, or I would die for you, Junie. I love you, my beautiful one, as man never loved woman before."

He raised her little white hands, and laid his hot, burning cheek against them, murmuring that "no king in the wide, wide world was as happy as he."

The very strength of the passionate love she had evoked frightened and dismayed her.

Ah! it was well for poor Arthur that he did not dream

of the pitiful truth—that the heart he would have died to win was another's, and that Junie had sought his protecting love only through pique.

From his position among the trees, Harry Granger had witnessed Arthur Seymour raise Junie's hands to his lips, and the sight had almost maddened him; his handsome face paled to the hue of death, and he could scarcely restrain the mad impulse of tearing those little hands from his clasp and crying out, "Junie, my little bride, you are mine! No other man must dare clasp your hands, or talk to you of love."

Then, like a terrible shock came the remembrance of the announcement he had seen in the papers. Junie was free from that marriage vow—freed by her own will—free as air to love whom she chose. He had no right to interfere—he was no more to her than a stranger.

He forgot that Dolly Carleton was clinging tenderly to his arm, smiling archly up into his eyes, and rallying him upon the whiteness of his face and the sighs that broke unconsciously from his lips. He neither saw nor heard her.

"Why did Fate bring me here," he was asking himself, bitterly, "face to face with —her? If it were not cowardly, I would leave at once. It would torture me to madness to live under the same roof with her a month—a long, terrible month—and witness such scenes as this."

Again the sickening doubt returned to him with full force: some lover whom she had known before must have coaxed her from him. Junie was so young, so childish, so inexperienced, it would have been easy to persuade her.

"Then she must have married me without love," he cried out to himself, hotly; "and if I find out that Arthur Seymour is at the bottom of this, there will be a terrible reckoning between us."

Then the Granger pride came to his rescue; and those who saw him bending so tenderly over Dolly Carleton

never would have dreamed how madly he worshiped the white-faced young girl standing by Arthur Seymour's side.

Every glance that Harry Granger gave to Dolly pierced poor little Junie's heart like a dagger.

"He is the cruellest of heartless flirts," she told herself.

"He is soon to marry Louisa Melrose, the banker's daughter. I must warn Dolly Carleton, or he may break her heart as he did mine."

She never heard the tender words of love her happy young lover was breathing. Suddenly she found that Arthur had stopped talking, and she had not noticed when he stopped.

"I found it was useless to say any more," he said. "You were not listening—you did not hear me. Junie, my precious little love, you are not well!" he cried, anxiously. "Your face flushes and pales, your hands are cold and trembling. I am afraid you are ill, darling."

Again that little shrill laugh, that was half a sob, broke over Junie's quivering lips.

Ill! Why, all the illness in the world put together could not equal one pang of the agony that wrung her poor little heart.

"Waltzing has made my head dizzy," she sobbed. "Take me away from the lights and the music and the people, Arthur. I—I can not endure it any longer. Take me back to the house," she cried, piteously.

He could not understand why she shrunk so from his protecting arm, which he placed around her, or his caresses—the first he had ever offered her—and turned her head away when he stooped down and whispered, "No one is looking, Junie, dear. Give me just one kiss, darling, to seal our betrothal."

"She is so bewitchingly shy, this timid little love of mine," thought Arthur, smiling amusedly. "I have not taught her to love me well enough for that yet."

When Junie reached the house she fairly flew down the long corridor to her own room.

Marie, the pretty French girl who served the double purpose of nurse to mischievous little Vic and maid to Junie as well, stood before the mantle arranging a vase of flowers.

But the vase nearly fell from her hands as she heard the patter of those little slippered feet, and turning quickly, saw Junie, white as a veritable ghost, standing in the door-way.

"Why, Miss Junie!" she cried, aghast, "what is the matter? You look as though you were going to die, you're so white and strange!"

"Be kind to me, Marie," sobbed Junie, groping her way into the room like one suddenly stricken blind. "If some one does not speak kindly to me, I am sure that I shall die! My heart is so sore, Marie—oh, so sore!"

"Heaven bless the child!" thought the warm-hearted French girl, fairly carrying her to a chair as she would have carried little Vic. "Those jealous Carleton girls have probably been abusing her because Mr. Arthur is head over heels in love with her. The envious things!"

Poor little Junie's heart was fairly bursting for want of sympathy, and there was no one to talk to but honest, faithful Marie. It was little wonder, in her sore distress, she turned to her.

"I am going away from here, Marie," she said. "I am going to-night, but you must not let any one know. If I were to stay here I should die;" and the lovely, blue, childish eyes she raised to Marie's face were swimming in tears.

"Oh, fy, fy! you must not sink down like that, when a cold wave of trouble blows over you," cried the vivacious French girl. "You must brace up and meet it."

"I am not strong enough to meet it," declared Junie,

despairingly. "No young girl's fate was ever so cruel as mine."

"That's what you think," said Marie; "but there's many a one covers an aching heart with a gay, saucy smile, and the prying world is none the wiser for it. You would never get along in the fashionable world," laughed Marie, "if you took things to heart like that."

"I am sure I would not," sobbed Junie, covering her face with her trembling little hands. "I never was intended for fashionable life. I, who am only a farmer's daughter."

"No," said Marie, with a little short laugh. "In fashionable life one smiles at the loss of a lover, even though one loved him, and consoles one'sself by looking for another."

"Do they? Does any one—ever lose one's lover?" gasped Junie. "I thought—that is, I never thought," she stammered, stopping short in dismay. "What do they do, Marie," she whispered, with startling eagerness—"what do they do when they lose their lovers? When one loses one's love, one's heart must break; and one can not live when one's heart is broken, Marie."

"A wise girl never lets the lover know how much she cares for him," declared Marie, emphatically. "She turns around and flirts desperately with others, and when the old lover sees how much others care for her, ten to one he is back on his knees again, begging for the love he once cared so little for."

Junie sprung from her chair, her face flushed and eager, her lips parted, and her blue eyes shining excitedly.

"You think if a young girl would do that, her old lover would be sure to come back to her?" asked Junie, piteously, scarcely breathing lest a word might fall from Marie's lips which she would not catch.

"Yes, I think so," she replied. "Anyhow, it wouldn't

do a spirited young girl a bit of harm to try the experiment."

"Then I think I won't go away to-night," said Junie, faintly. "I—I think I will stay here a little longer, Marie."

"A home like this is not found every day," replied Marie; "and if all I hear is true, Mr. Arthur will be offering you one of your own some day soon. I—"

"Oh, don't, don't, Marie!" cried Junie, with a scared, frightened look leaping into her eyes. "Oh, I could never, never marry Arthur Seymour! I—I dare not." She fluttered down like a wounded bird, in a little white heap at Marie's feet as she spoke, trembling like a leaf.

"Why?" asked Marie, suspiciously. "You must be crazy to say such a thing, Junie Dean. What's the reason you dare not?"

"I—I can not tell you," panted Junie, desperately. "You would hate me, despise me, if you knew all. I could not marry anybody! it would be wrong to love me."

CHAPTER XXIV.

ALL night long Junie tossed restlessly on her snow-white pillow.

"Mamma! mamma!" she wailed, "the retribution that Fanny always said would come to me for my willful ways has come to me now. Oh, mamma, if I could only kneel down at your feet and tell you of the cruel wrong I have suffered, you would not scold me; you would pity your poor, sore-hearted little Junie. I did not dream an elopement could be so very, very wrong. I loved him so well and trusted him so!"

That terrible scene at the hotel, where he had told her so mockingly their marriage was no marriage, came back to her with terrible force; how she had gone down on her knees to him, begging him, praying him not to spoil her

young life, and how he had turned from her with a mocking, taunting laugh as she sunk, fainting, at his feet, crying out that his words had killed her!

Oh, what a cruel blighting of love's young dream!

Now they had met again as strangers under one roof!

Of all the pitiful stories she had ever read—of all the sad poems—none were so sad as the story of her own life. And yet, oh, the pity of it! the pity of it!—Harry Granger was her first and only love—the handsome hero with the dark, kingly beauty of a god, who had won so completely all the love of her trusting little heart; and the first sweet, thrilling dawn of love is the grand dream of life, and she realized she loved him still!

Junie was up with the dawn the next morning, and it was pitiful to see how careful she was over her toilet. She wore a pretty blue lawn wrapper, daintily ruffled at the throat and wrists, and adorned with tiny blue satin bows, and her long golden curls were looped back with a knot of blue.

Her heart beat tumultuously, and she trembled violently as she opened the door of the breakfast-room.

Harry Granger knew but too well who it was that entered the room, but he did not glance up. He seemed wholly engrossed in Dolly Carleton's chatter. If he had raised his eyes to hers, poor little Junie felt that she would sink down in the door-way.

Arthur, flushed and eager, went hurriedly to the door to meet her, pressing those cold, unresponsive little fingers rapturously as he led her to her seat.

Junie never remembered how that breakfast passed. It all seemed like a confused dream to her—Irene's keen, brilliant wit, and Dolly's coquettish laughter.

Junie alone was silent, and she was thankful when it was over and she could escape to her own room to have a good hearty cry all by herself.

As they were leaving the breakfast-room, Irene touched Arthur on the arm, and whispered, hoarsely:

"Come out to the grounds for a little while, Arthur. I want to speak to you."

He followed her out into the arbor. Then she suddenly turned around and faced him.

"Arthur," she said, hoarsely, "I want to ask you if the report I have just heard is true? I will believe it from no other lips but yours, that you are going to marry Junie Dean."

"It is quite true, Irene," he answered, flushing slightly.

His answer seemed to madden her.

"You love her," she cried, passionately, "without knowing or caring what she is! But be warned in time, Arthur. She is a designing little creature, who carries the hearts of men by storm with her pretty face and innocent baby ways. Her past is shrouded in darkness, and holds the blackest of secrets."

"Irene! Miss Carleton!" cried Arthur Seymour, white to the very lips. "You must not speak in that way of Junie. There is no young girl on earth more pure, more worthy of love and reverence than my little darling, whom I so dearly love."

But Irene interrupted him. All the rich color had faded from her cheeks and lips, and there was a look in her eyes that startled him.

"I would save you from yourself, Arthur," she cried, hoarsely. "None are so blind as those who will not see. Be warned in time. You will lavish all the love of your nature upon her, but she will never return it. These pretty-faced little creatures can never know or understand the depth of love. She will soon tire of you, Arthur, and seek new conquests. She does not love you, Arthur. The time will come when you will say to yourself, 'Would to Heaven I had taken Irene's advice in time.'"

"My dear Irene, why do you say this to me?" he asked,

huskily. "Little Junie is the only young girl I could ever love. My fate, which to me is a very happy one, is fixed beyond recall. I would not change it if I could."

"Shall I tell you why I have warned you?" cried Irene, desperately, coming a step nearer him, so near that he could feel her feverish breath upon his cheek. "Then listen: it is because I love you!"

She turned with the swiftness of the wind as she uttered the thrilling words, and left him standing there almost rooted to the spot in sheer amazement and unutterable surprise, with the terrible warning she had just uttered ringing like a death-knell in his ears—Be warned in time!

"There is no dark secret in Junie's past life," he muttered. "I can not, I will not believe it!"

At that instant he caught sight of Junie's blue dress among the trees; but before he could carry out his intention of joining her, little Vic came bounding down the path.

"Oh, here you are, you naughty, naughty Cousin Arthur!" she cried, springing up into his arms. "I have been looking everywhere for you."

"Have you?" he replied, kissing the eager, saucy mouth. "Well, now that you have found me, what do you want, my fairy?"

"You won't be angry if I ask you something, will you, Arthur?" coaxed little Vic, throwing her arms with childish abandon around his neck. "It's an awful naughty question, and I'll hide my face on your shoulder while I ask it."

"You may ask as many questions as you choose," laughed Arthur, smiling amusedly at the little girl's earnestness. "Now let us know what it is that you are so anxious to find out."

For a moment Vic hung her pretty curly head, and then whispered, shyly: "Is it true, Arthur, what I just heard me tell Dolly, that you are really and truly going to

marry my pretty Junie? It's awfully mean of you, Arthur, to take her away from me, and I never will forgive you for it—never, for she loves me the best.”

Arthur Seymour laughed merrily at little Vic's distress. “Oh, I see which way the wind blows. You are afraid of losing Junie.”

“But she don't care for you one bit,” persisted the child.

“What makes you think that?” replied Arthur, biting his lip and paling slightly at the bare possibilities of the thought.

“It isn't your picture she cries over so,” whispered Vic, kicking the blossoms of an adjacent rose-bush right and left with the toes of her tiny slippers. “She loves somebody else.”

In a single instant Arthur was all painful attention.

“A picture Junie cries over?” he asked, hoarsely, sinking down on a seat and seating little Vic on his knee. “You must tell me all about it, Vic,” he cried. “Whose picture was it?—and where did you see it?—and how do you know Junie cries over it?”

“You're just like papa,” pouted the child. “He always asks me a dozen questions at once. Why, she showed me the picture her own, own self, and she cried, oh, so hard over it, and said, ‘Oh, I loved him so much, Vic, and I shall never love any one else until the day I die.’”

“Perhaps it was her father—or brother,” replied Arthur, more to himself than to little Vic. “My God! have I a rival?”

“No, it was not,” cried Vic. “She told me what his name was, and it was not Dean.”

“What was the name she told you, Vic?” he cried, excitedly. “Think what it was, and you shall have the largest and finest wax doll money can buy for you.”

“I will think just as hard as ever I can—to get the wax doll,” replied Vic, earnestly: and she did think, hard in-

dead, but alas! for the fickleness of childhood's memory, the name would not come to her. "I can't think of the name just now, but I could run and fetch you the picture. I know where she keeps it, in a pretty jewel-box on the mantel. Shall I, Arthur?"

Arthur Seymour was a gentleman of honor, and he would have scorned to do an underhand action; but where love is weighed in the balance, reason and judgment are often found wanting.

The temptation was too much for him; a feverish desire filled his heart to gaze on the pictured face Junie wept over.

"Yes, bring me the portrait, quick, Vic," he answered, nervously. "But be careful lest any one should see you. I will wait for you here. Remember, no one must see you with the portrait, Victorine. It must be a dead secret between you and me."

CHAPTER XXV.

BUT much to little Vic's amazement, the portrait was nowhere to be found; and Arthur was forced to bide his time in discovering this unknown rival.

The days and weeks flew rapidly on, and since the night of the garden-party, Junie had lovers by the score, much to Arthur Seymour's intense annoyance. But Harry Granger did not seem to notice it—a silent compact seemed to exist between them to wholly ignore each other.

If a wall of ice had been built up between them, they could not have been colder to each other or further apart. Though under one roof, they never exchanged a glance or a word together; their hands never clasped, nor did their eyes ever meet. And matters might have continued so had not fate interposed.

It happened in this way:

It was a bright, sunny morning, and Irene, Dolly, and

Junie were going out for a ride. Arthur Seymour was to accompany Junie, and it fell to the lot of Harry Granger to accompany Irene and Dolly.

The groom had brought the horses around to the front porch, where the young ladies stood ready to mount.

Arthur had gone in search of Junie's riding-whip, and she stood quite alone on the porch, leaning against one of the vine-covered pillars. How fair she looked in the bright glow of the sunshine as it fell upon her waving golden hair and white, nodding plumes, and dimpled, lovely face! Her dark-blue velvet riding-habit fitted her slight girlish figure to perfection, and Harry Granger's heart beat sorely in his breast as it rushed over him with a great wave of sadness what he had lost. At that moment the groom brought the pony which Junie was to ride close up to the steps—a shining, glossy creature, prancing restlessly beneath the weight of the light saddle, with head thrown back, and a vicious, lurking mischief gleaming in its eye. In a moment Harry Granger forgot the barrier between them in the consternation of seeing Junie about to mount the dangerous pony.

"Miss Dean," he cried, springing eagerly forward and grasping the reins determinedly, "you must not ride this pony. She is not to be trusted. Your life might pay the penalty if you attempted it. You *must* not."

In an instant all the hot color had receded from Junie's dimpled face.

"*Must* not," she repeated, scornfully, raising her lovely blue eyes full of angry light to his. "I am not a school-girl to be dictated to, Mr.—Mr.—Granger, and you have no right to do it."

He fell back as though she had struck him a blow, his handsome face paling to the lips.

"I know that I have no right," he admitted, proudly.
"You must not look at my words in that light. I feared

only for your safety. I had no thought of dictating to you."

"Feared for my safety!" she cried, tremulously. "It is false—all false! Spare yourself any further uneasiness on my account, for I shall ride this black pony—the Gypsy Queen."

He forgot the stifled, angry words in his terrible fear for her safety.

"Junie," he cried, with thrilling earnestness, "do not, I beseech you, attempt to ride Gypsy Queen. It would not be best for you."

Her pretty childish eyes flashed defiantly, and with a touch of all her old reckless willfulness, she cried, spiritedly: "Mr. Seymour, the young gentleman to whom I am engaged, does not consider Gypsy Queen dangerous; and if he does not object, why, sir, should you?"

All the manly spirit in Harry Granger's heart rose to his aid at once. He bowed his dark, handsome head stiffly, and turned away with a deathly sickness at his heart which his set, white face did not reveal.

"How interested you seem, Mr. Granger!" called Dolly, spitefully.

He knew Junie was listening, even though she had turned her golden head away, and he answered carelessly, and with a voice not quite steady: "I am sure I did no more than any other gentleman would have done upon seeing a young girl so willfully rash as to attempt to ride a horse like that."

"I will ride Gypsy Queen now," thought Junie, bitterly, "if I knew it would be sure death; then, perhaps, when he looked down on my dead, white face, some regret would pierce his stony heart for the wrong he has done me." She leaned her golden head down on the pony's glossy neck and murmured, faintly: "Yes, if I lay dead, and Harry came and knelt in the long green grass above my grave, and called my name, the sound of it on the

lips I love would reach me—oh, my love! my love! it would reach me in my grave.”

At that instant Arthur returned, and, placing her riding-whip in her tiny gloved hand, quickly vaulted into his own saddle. It nearly maddened Harry when he saw how careless Arthur was of Junie's perilous situation. He would have called out to him and warned him of it, but at that moment Arthur gave the mettlesome ponies a touch with his whip which sent them skimming down the avenue like swallows.

“We must manage to keep up with them, Miss Dolly,” he cried, hoarsely; “they are gaining upon us.”

“Let them,” pouted Dolly, pettishly; “there is no pleasure in riding so fast that one is quite out of breath,” she panted.

And as if cruel Fate aided in detaining him, one of the buckles of Irene's saddle broke.

“You must go on without me,” whispered Irene; perhaps it was just as well—two is company and three is none.

Harry did not quite catch the hurriedly spoken words, and he was congratulating himself upon the prospect of taking both of the young ladies home at once, when Dolly signified her intention to finish their ride.

There was no help for it, and, after seeing Irene and her horse taken care of, they hurried rapidly on in the direction Junie and Arthur had gone.

A curve in the road brought them within sight; and with a deadly sinking at his heart, Harry saw that Junie's pony had become quite unmanageable, rearing and plunging, threatening to throw the white-faced girl who clung to her in such terror at every mad plunge, and even Arthur's pony, in affright, had dashed galloping down the road. Then a terrible cry broke from Harry Granger's ashen lips. The Gypsy Queen was galloping riderless down the road. In an instant Harry had leaped from his saddle,

and with a terrible cry was bending over the little blue velvet heap lying so still in the long, green grass by the road-side.

With a groan he raised Junie in his strong arms, covering her white, still face with his passionate, burning kisses, and in wild bursts of sorrow, groaning out, "Oh, my God! my darling is dead—dead—dead!"

No one was near. Dolly and Arthur had not come in sight, and there was no one to witness the surging wave of passionate grief that welled up from his heart as he clasped once more to his heart, in a mad embrace, the pretty young girl whom he had so madly worshiped and lost so cruelly.

At that moment Arthur and Dolly came dashing up.

"Is she hurt?" cried Arthur, springing from the saddle and reaching Harry's side in an instant, and holding out his arms for the precious burden lying so still and white against Harry Granger's throbbing breast. "I thank you more than I can express for the assistance you have rendered my little Junie," continued he. "I will relieve you of your care now, if you please."

Insensibly, Harry Granger's arms tightened around her.

"I will relieve you of your burden," repeated Arthur Seymour, flushing redly. "I am engaged to Miss Junie, and I claim, of course, the right to protect her," he added, haughtily, advancing closer, with extended arms.

Slowly Harry Granger unwound his strong arms from about her, but the pang that it cost him was more bitter than death and what it cost him to resign her to another's embrace, only Heaven alone knew.

At that instant Junie's blue eyes fluttered wide open and fell upon Harry Granger's face with a smile of unutterable childish content—a glance which cut poor Harry's heart like a knife.

"Are you hurt, Junie darling?" cried Arthur, anx-

iously. "Tell me, my love, are you hurt? I shall have Gypsy Queen shot, if she has hurt you!"

"No, not very much," she answered, with a little, defiant laugh. "I was determined to ride Gypsy Queen. The fall only stunned me. I am not hurt, Arthur. You shall help me to mount again, and I shall ride home, none the worse for the Queen's naughty prank."

To this Arthur protested vehemently, but Harry Granger never opened his lips.

"He does not interfere," thought Junie, bitterly. "My life or my safety is less to him than the violets he crushes so ruthlessly beneath his heel."

Dolly and Harry had cantered rapidly on, and Arthur could not help noticing how Junie's wistful glance followed them with such a brooding, shadowy pain in their blue depth; and in a moment all the jealousy of his nature was aroused, and he remarked, gayly:

"I did not dream Miss Dolly was given to such desperate flirtations as she is indulging in with handsome Harry Granger; for, if report speaks truly, he is soon to marry Banker Melrose's daughter. Upon my word, our fascinating young friend should be labeled—'Out of the market.'"

CHAPTER XXVI.

"PLEASE talk to me of something else, Arthur," said Junie, striving to speak calmly. "The subject does not interest me in the least."

A look of relief swept over Arthur's face. Ah! his suspicions were groundless, then, after all. Junie was not interested in handsome Harry Granger.

He longed to ask her about the portrait little Vic had seen her crying over. Who this rival was (if such a person really existed) who could wring a pearly tear from those lovely eyes.

Arthur did his best to interest her as they rode homeward, picturing what their future was to be like, but no smile curved the red coral lips. Junie sat staring straight ahead, watching intently the two figures in the distance.

At the gate stood Mr. Markham, and a look of intense relief swept over his face as he hastened to Junie's side.

"Poor little girl," he said, anxiously. "Mr. Granger has just told me of the terrible accident and narrow escape you have had, and you have given us a terrible scare over the matter. My wife purchased the pony yesterday for Junie. Of course she had no idea of the viciousness of the Queen. Ladies are no judges of these affairs; but I am heartily glad there are no bones broken," he added, turning to Arthur.

From behind the lace-draped curtains of her own room Mrs. Markham and Irene stood watching the trio below.

"Foiled!" cried Irene, angrily, from between her closed teeth. "I never expected the girl would return alive from that ride. I could have sworn it, and yet you see how Fate foils me. I would have had her die by *accident*, if it could have been accomplished, but Fate means to play at cross-purposes with me; but I am too desperate to be trifled with. I shall take the affair into my own hand and snap my fingers at the result," cried Irene. "The more I attempt to humiliate Junie Dean the more people praise her—praise her pink-and-white dimpled baby face and childish ways, until I hate her—hate her; and when Arthur Seymour fell a victim to her pretty face, that was more than mortal woman could tamely endure; yet I am seemingly as far from my glorious revenge as ever."

"A smart girl always takes fate into her own hands," remarked Mrs. Markham, significantly. "No human being shall stand between me and my husband's wealth. You should let no one stand between you and Arthur Seymour's wealth."

"He is already engaged to Junie Dean, and loves her."

He dared tell me so to my face," cried Irene, wrathfully, her black eyes blazing. "We must think up some way to turn him from her; he must learn to despise her. There is but one way—"

"Have you ever noticed how strangely Harry Granger holds aloof from her?" asked Mrs. Markham, slowly. "Yet, as I have watched him narrowly, I have observed a strange, undefinable look creep into his eyes as they rest unobserved upon Junie Dean. I am sure that they have met before, and that some secret lies between them."

"Impossible!" retorted Irene, sharply, tossing back her raven-dark braids and toying with the crimson bows that fastened them. "Junie Dean is only a simple country girl, as she herself admits. What, then, could handsome Harry Granger have had in common with her? My dear sister, don't let your foolish imagination carry you away."

"They may have been lovers," replied Mrs. Markham, slowly.

"Then I wish she had married him and left Arthur Seymour for me," cried Irene, with a harsh, bitter laugh that was unpleasant to hear.

"I can not say that *I* wish it," returned Mrs. Markham, coolly. "Your poor sister Dolly needs the Granger fortune as badly as any one. The young man seems attentive enough to her, and, if I mistake not, he will propose soon."

The thought was galling to haughty Irene Carleton's proud nature. Dolly, her sharp-tongued, insipid-faced sister Dolly, securing a wealthy husband first, while she, the beauty of the family, had been coolly jilted for a plain farmer's daughter.

No wonder she vowed a bitter vengeance upon innocent little Junie Dean.

Meanwhile Junie had quickly fled upstairs to her own room, with the bitter cry falling from her lips, "I wish—"

oh, Heaven pardon me!—I wish that the cruel pony had killed me!”

The next sentence that dropped from her white, quivering lips showed plainly where her thoughts were drifting.

She took the photograph from its resting-place in her heaving bosom, and covered it with passionate kisses.

“It is cruel and unjust to torture me so. When I see your eyes rest on Dolly Carleton’s face, as they rested once on mine, the pain of it is more than I can bear. I should have gone away—anywhere—anywhere—away from your fatal presence.”

She remembered the story she had once read, of a young girl whose great love for a faithless lover had proved her death-warrant. How she had followed him the wide world over to warn him of a wicked rival; and how he had rewarded her faithfulness by plunging a dagger into her snow-white breast. Yet, even in that terrible moment she had kissed the cruel hand that struck the blow, and blessed him with her last feeble breath.

“I am like that poor, faithful creature,” sobbed Junie, pitifully. “I can not crush my love. It will live through eternity.”

He had proven false to her; even the memory of the banker’s daughter, whom report said he was soon to marry, seemed to have faded from his mind as he flirted desperately with Dolly Carleton, wore her roses, and hung over her at the piano.

“Marie was wrong,” sighed Junie. “My bitter experience should be a warning to all young girls whose lovers have tired of them. When love once dies out of the heart it can never be rekindled with the dead ashes of the past. If I were to warn Dolly, she would not heed me. I will tell her all, and then I will go away,” she wailed.

It was strange how little she cared for Arthur Seymour’s adoring worship, or for the throngs of eligible young gentlemen who hovered so continually around her, openly de-

declaring they meant to win her if they could. All was fair in love and war. But Junie turned from them one and all with a heart weary and sick, as did the heart-broken girl in the beautiful poem—

“Starved—starved—starved!

Yet queen of the feast was she,
And a liveried servant's ebony hands
Proffered the fruits of tropical lands
To her on bended knee;
Yet a horrible hunger, night and day,
Was gnawing her life and strength away.

“Many a suitor wooed,

For she was very fair;
Fortunes were proffered, and jewels bought,
And challenges given and duels fought;
But what did my lady care?
For she wasted her love and gave her heart
To one who haughtily stood apart.

“She thirsted for one fond look—

She starved for a kiss denied;
But he cared no more for her smile or blush
Than the glacier cares for the red rose-bush;
And she pined away and died.
And true hearts mourned her many a year,
While the man she died for shed not a tear.
’Tis ever the way of the foolish fair,
To die for the one who does not care.”

As is usually the case where there are pretty, attractive young ladies, Mr. Markham's parlors were always thronged with guests; and although Junie always shrunk from the taunting, covert sneers Irene and Dolly were sure to cast at her, yet to please Mr. Markham, who insisted upon her presence, as well as Arthur, Junie was obliged to overcome her timidity, and go down to the parlors and mingle among the guests.

A week had passed since the eventful ride which had nearly cost Junie her life, and during that time Harry

Granger had become more cold and distant, if that were possible, than before.

It was evening. Irene Carleton sat in the drawing-room, with her bright, black, glittering eyes apparently bent upon the book she held in her lap, but in reality casting furtive glances at the little drooping figure half hidden behind the silken curtains of the bay-window, over whose chair Arthur Seymour was tenderly leaning.

Dolly Carleton sat at the piano, running her white, jeweled fingers idly over the ivory keys, wondering why her pretty, flippant little speeches brought no smile to Harry Granger's dark, brooding eyes, as his gaze drifted away from her into the shadows beyond.

"Shall I sing you something, Harry—Mr. Granger?" asked Dolly, glancing coyly up into the stern, gloomy face.

"If you like," responded Harry, absently.

"What would you like? Something sentimental?" she asked, with a blush that was wholly lost upon her companion.

"I have learned to conquer all likes and dislikes long ago," he replied, abstractedly. "Sing what pleases you, Miss Dolly. I shall be sure to appreciate it."

"But surely you have some favorite song, some tender little melody that has found its way to your heart. Haven't you, Mr. Granger?"

He leaned his dark, handsome head back against the crimson velvet cushions of the arm-chair, and his glance wandered to the two figures in the bay-window.

Arthur Seymour's lover-like attitude filled him with the keenest jealousy. It was more than human endurance could calmly stand.

A quick resolve leaped up into his dark, burning eyes; his face flushed and paled alternately as he rose from his seat and strode directly across the room to where Junie and Arthur sat.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HARRY GRANGER had scarcely advanced a dozen steps ere he seemed to repent of the hasty thought that prompted the action.

He had at first determined to boldly confront Junie, and demand a full, explicit explanation as to why she had so heartlessly fled from him and his love.

"It will be the better plan to seek an interview with her alone," he thought, excitedly, wheeling about and retracing his steps. "Yes, I will see her to-morrow. She might have spared me the pain of seeing another clasp her hands and smile upon her," he added. If he had read such a story—of a young bride deserting her husband before the first week of their honey-moon had waned, during his enforced absence of a day, then procuring legal help to break the bonds which held her, without deigning one word to the amazed, grief-stricken young husband—it would have been hard for him to have credited so sad a story. He would have told himself "truth is stranger than fiction." Yet, every heart holds some dread secret of which the world knows not; for, every day around us, stranger things are happening than any of the romances given us from a novelist's pen.

"Are you going to ask Junie to help me sing?" called Dolly, maliciously; "perhaps she will play while I sing."

Junie half rose from her chair. "I am sorry, but I neither sing nor play—now," faltered Junie, flushing redly.

Irene tittered as sarcastically as good breeding would permit, and for pure spite, Dolly rattled off a lively tune about "Milkmaids, who waited for the cows at five o'clock in the morning."

"Do not notice them, my darling," cried Arthur,

forcing Junie back into her seat. "If you were to leave the room just now, they would congratulate themselves upon the success of their rudeness. Quietly ignore them—that is best." Still the red lips quivered grievously. "Pay no attention to them, my Junie," he continued. "When you are my bride, you shall never know one wish unfulfilled. These pretty little hands shall be loaded with precious jewels a princess might envy. And another thing, dear, I want you to do for my sake, and that is, to improve yourself in music."

"I was never intended for anybody," sighed Junie, in a stifled, sobbing voice; "and the song Dolly is singing is bitterly true of the plain country lassie:

"On her native hills she is full of grace,
But in city folk's parlors quite out of place."

"It is not true," cried Arthur, hotly. "Do you remember the story of the handsome king before whom all women bowed and secretly adored, and when the time came for him to choose a queen, he stepped boldly down from his throne, strode quickly from among them, and, kneeling low before a plain, simple country maiden whom he met by the road-side, begged her—the simplest and purest maiden of them all—to be his bride—his queen?"

Still Junie shrunk from him. He wondered why she trembled like a fluttering, frightened dove when he attempted to caress her; yet he never once dreamed she was saying over and over again to her own heart:

"Poor Arthur! it is not right to deceive him so, for I can never marry him—oh! never—never. Yet, if I were to tell him so, he would turn from me bitterly—coldly, like all the rest of the world has done; and if I did not have some one to speak kindly to me, some one to anchor the drifting, broken threads of friendship to, I could never endure it."

She knew that she should have gone away from this

beautiful home, into which fate had drifted her, on the very night she had met Harry Granger so suddenly at the garden-party.

But, like the silly, fluttering moth, that seems to insensibly feel the danger of the flame around which it hovers, and yet is unable to break away, poor little Junie could not draw herself away from the magnetic influence of him who had been to her, for one short, happy week, her world.

"Yet poor little, hungry-hearted Junie watched him from a distance, making no sign of the yearning pain she felt at losing him.

Quietly, Arthur had clasped the little, nervous, fluttering hands that lay in her lap, and a momentary silence had fallen between them, which was broken by Harry Granger's voice. Dolly had asked him to reverse the order of things and sing and play something for her.

"Perhaps I may choose some melody that is quite too old and sentimental to please you, Miss Dolly," he said, in his clear, melodious voice.

Dolly's heart gave a quick throb, and she glanced triumphantly at Irene, as much as to say, "See how considerate he is of what will please me!" and she blushed, as she gave her pale, fair hair a toss, and said, in a low under-tone:

"Anything you may sing will find an echo in my heart."

Dolly had hinted to him in a thousand different, delicate ways how much she was interested in him; but, unlike most handsome, agreeable young men, he never seemed to attach any importance to her artfully concocted speeches.

And now he only bowed courteously, as he took his seat at the piano to do her bidding.

From the large mirror, directly in front of him, he had a fine, full view of the occupants of the bay-window across the room.

"I will sing you a very old song," he said, raising his voice alightly; "and if the words are not quite correct, you must credit it to my poor memory."

A dead silence fell over the occupants of the room, as Harry ran his white, shapely fingers over the keys.

The wind sighed among the crimson rose vines that teased their fragrant treasures against the casement near where Junie sat, and even the brilliant pendants of the chandeliers seemed to tremble, as Harry Granger's deep, melodious voice trilled through the room.

As the first line fell from his impassioned lips he could not resist the impulse to raise his eyes to the mirror before him, and in that one instantaneous glance he beheld a white, girlish face bending eagerly forward. Whether it was anger or remorse that paled her dimpled cheek he could not say.

He lowered the white lids over his scorching eyes, and never raised them again until he had finished the verse, and these were the words he sung:

"When other eyes and other lips
Their tales of love may tell—
And hands clasp thine,
As once did mine,
With all love's tender spell—
Draw back the curtain from the past,
Let memory drift to me;
Yes—at such a moment I but ask
That you'll remember me."

There was a low, gasping cry from the little figure crouching among the velvet cushions in the bay-window—a low, piteous, wailing cry that would have melted a heart of stone, and poor little Junie, the miserable, deserted little child-bride, sprung wildly from her seat, tottered forward a few steps, then fell face downward in the center of the room, in a deadly swoon.

In a moment, Arthur was kneeling by her side, while

Irene turned haughtily to the bell, giving it a violent pull.

"She has just spoiled our evening," pouted Dolly; but the dark, frowning look Arthur gave her silenced her completely.

In a moment, Mr. Markham, followed by his wife, hurriedly entered the parlor, while around the door, out in the corridor, stood a group of sympathizing servants, for little Junie was like a ray of sunshine in that old gloomy mansion—she was such a favorite that there was not one of those honest creatures but would have willingly died for her sweet sake.

"Let me attend to Miss Junie, please," cried Marie, making her way with a white, scared face through the crowd, and before any one could interfere she lifted the frail, willowy figure in her strong young arms and laid her on the bed safe in her own little room.

All that night Harry Granger paced the floor of his room.

"Could it have been remorse, when my song brought back all those old bitter-sweet memories, that caused her to faint?" he asked himself.

It wanted a whole week yet to the day set for her marriage with Arthur Seymour. "Who knows what may happen in a week's time?" he cried, hoarsely, laying his hot, feverish head down upon the cold, pulseless, marble mantel.

Suddenly a thought, so joyous that it almost took his breath away, darted across his troubled mind, like a rush of bright, radiant moonlight on a dark, starless night.

In all his sorrow he had raised his eyes to a picture above the mantel—a picture of two lovers clasped in each other's arms. There were two words written beneath the picture, and those two words were, "The Reconciliation." The radiant joy on the two pictured faces told its own eloquent story. Harry Granger was a strong man, yet he

trembled as he took from his breast-pocket a faded four-leaved clover which he wrapped in a note, bearing these few significant words:

"Junie, will you accept this flower, with all that its history has ever implied? I will await your answer an hour hence in the parlor."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

As though it were but yesterday, Harry could see before his mind's eye that golden, curly head popping up from among the sweet, pink clover in the old orchard by the brook-side.

And he could almost fancy he heard the gay, saucy, fresh young voice, clear as the notes of a wild bird, trilling out the words that had caused him to linger curiously by the babbling brook, eager to catch a glimpse of the little maiden so snugly hidden among the pink clover, with only the top of a sunny head visible, and one little white hand beating time to the mystical words of the song:

"When a maiden finds a four-leaved clover,
On that day she'll meet her lover;
She'll know him by her beating heart—
For love is of each life a part."

Long, weary months had passed since then. He had been married, disinherited, and deserted. He remembered, with a bitter sigh, how hopeful he had been on that bright morning when he had left Junie at the hotel, and started out to find his friend, Louis Arnold, to talk with him about the grand speculation which was to bring him a fortune which he could lavish on pretty little Junie, his bride—of the grand plans they had arranged on board the steamer, and of his grief and horror on finding that he had been carried out to sea.

He talked of the fate worse than death which had met him face to face as he hastened back to the hotel where he

had left her. Junie had deserted him, and had appealed to the law to sever the bonds that bound her to this young husband of a week.

"If ever a man has had trouble in this world, I am that man," he sighed.

Months ago a cablegram from his friend had informed him that their speculation was a grand success—they were both wealthy men for life.

The news had come to him too late. Junie would never share it with him now; and it had been all for her sake that he had craved it so earnestly.

Again the words of the picture, "The Reconciliation," fell like a balm upon his turbulent heart.

He would have been willing to forget his wounded pride—forget all the sorrow she had caused him—to have clasped her once more in his arms and called her his.

What will not a man do when swayed by the power of love? Harry had hoped to see Junie at breakfast, but she did not make her appearance; and an hour later he sent her the note, begging an interview, inclosing the four-leaved clover as an eloquent reminder of what they had once been to each other.

"Tell her I will wait for an answer here," he said.

The servant bowed, and closed the door of the library softly after him.

"He likes pretty Miss Junie, too," muttered Sambo, eying the note curiously, as he hurried through the corridor. "Oh, wouldn't that spiteful Miss Dolly be just raving if she knew this, though!"

"If she knew what?" cried a shrill voice at his elbow; and before him, gazing suspiciously at the note he held in his hand, stood Dolly Carleton herself.

"Where are you going?" she asked, sharply, still eying the note.

"On an errand for Massa Granger, miss," responded the boy.

At that instant her keen, piercing eye caught sight of the superscription upon the envelope, which read, "Junie Dean."

"For Junie Dean!" she gasped. "What could he have to say to her? I must and shall know."

In a second she had torn it from the boy's hand.

"Sambo, you must never tell of this," she whispered, hoarsely. "I will take it to Junie Dean myself."

"Massa Granger said I was to give it to no one but the young lady herself," muttered Sambo.

Dolly thrust her hand down into the pocket of her dress, and drew forth a handful of bright, shining coins.

"These will buy your silence, Sambo," she cried, hoarsely. "If Mr. Granger ever questions you about this affair, remember, you are to say you gave the note into Junie Dean's own hands. Do you understand?"

"Yes'm," replied the boy, eagerly pocketing the coins, as he turned away.

With eyes fairly blazing and cheeks flushed with rage, Dolly Carleton burst into the sitting-room, where she knew she should find her two sisters.

Mrs. Markham and Irene glanced up in astonishment from their novels, and one glance at Dolly's distorted face told them something unusual had happened, when languid, insipid Dolly was worked up into a passion like this, and their eyes fell simultaneously on the crumpled envelope she held tightly crushed in her fingers.

"Well," said Irene, coolly, "what's the matter? Has Mr. Markham found out at last that we have been running in debt on the strength of his name, and refused to foot the bills—or what?"

"No, it's Junie Dean again," cried Dolly, hoarsely. "She boldly captured your lover, and now she is angling after mine."

In an instant Mrs. Markham was on her feet.

"There! I told you so. Irene!" she cried, triumphant

ly. "I told you there was something between them—some secret."

And almost by force she took the note from Dolly's hand and spread it out on the table, carefully smoothing out the crumples, and revealing the faded clover. Irene, with strangely glittering eyes, glided up to her sister's side and leaned breathlessly over her shoulder. Dolly sunk down into a chair, fairly shaking with uncontrollable anger, while Mrs. Markham slowly read the incomprehensible note aloud which bore but these strange words:

"JUNIE,—Will you accept this flower with all that its history has ever implied? I will await an answer an hour hence in the library.

HARRY GRANGER."

"With all that its history has ever implied," repeated Mrs. Markham, looking up blankly. "I do not understand that sentence; it must have some significance known only to themselves. Every one knows that a four-leaved clover is supposed to bring good luck to the finder; but that is hardly applicable in this case," she went on, thoughtfully. "For once in my life, clever as I am, I have found an enigma that I can not solve. What is your opinion of this strange note, Irene?"

"It certainly looks as though they had met before. The very familiarity he uses in addressing her substantiates that fact; besides, I have another important clue," added Irene, coolly, and, going to her writing-desk, she unlocked a private drawer, taking from it the letter Junie had written to her sister Fanny, which she had taken from the mail-bag, as the reader doubtless remembers, and which she proceeded to read aloud to her astonished sisters, remarking, in conclusion, "This young lover whom she refers to as 'having spoiled her young life,' is, in my opinion, none other than Harry Granger himself."

A terrible change had come over Dolly Carleton's face.

"That Junie Dean has been an evil genius in this fam-

ily," she muttered, hoarsely; "and it seems plain either you or I must lose our lover, Irene. I only laughed at your plans of vengeance before, but now I am with you heart and soul."

"No one shall interfere in my plans. I will work out my vengeance alone," retorted Irene—"all alone, as you must work out yours."

"Then I shall make the first move toward mine now," exclaimed Dolly; and with that shrill, peculiar laugh which always made Irene shiver, Dolly picked up the four-leaved clover and hurriedly quitted the room.

"Courage! courage!" whispered Dolly to herself, as she sped quickly toward the library, where she knew she would find Harry Granger, on her fatal errand. She knocked timidly on the door, smiling bitterly at the tremulous eagerness in the deep, musical voice that bade her enter. The patter of the little slippered feet, and the tremulous, timid knock had sounded so much like Junie's, Harry Granger had expected to see her standing on the threshold, as the door swung slowly back on its hinges.

But all the bright, glad light died out of his face as he saw it was Dolly Carleton, and not Junie.

At that same instant his eyes fell upon the faded clover she carried in her hand, and the smile died away on his lips, leaving them a pale, ashy white.

"I am afraid I disturb you," she began, "but I have something to say to you. Can you not guess what it is, Harry—Mr. Granger?"

Harry drew her into the room, and closed the door, then slowly folded his arms over his broad chest, as he replied, hoarsely:

"Junie has sent you with some message to me, is it so?"

She saw the knotted veins standing out on his temples; and she noted how husky his musical voice had grown; still, there was no wish in her heart to spare him, or save

him the pain which the cruel falsehood she was about to utter would cause him.

"I have brought you back your flower," she said, gently and distinctly. "Junie refuses to receive it," she went on, sympathetically, "and she bade me say—oh, Mr. Granger, I can not—oh, I can not tell you what she bade me say—spare me from uttering it, spare yourself from hearing it," cried Dolly, with apparent distress.

"Do not grieve for me, Miss Dolly," he said, with emotion. "Tell me the message. I am strong; I can bear it."

There was a moment of deep silence, broken only by Dolly's false voice as she answered, slowly:

"Junie said, 'Tell him I hate him, as woman never hated man before. He will know why. He must never speak to me again. Our lives lie the whole wide world apart.'"

CHAPTER XXIX.

THAT had been a very daring speech for Dolly Carleton to make. She had staked all upon the hope of striking out at random and hitting the truth. She had chosen her words carefully, and it never occurred to him to doubt her for a single instant.

As the stinging words had fallen slowly from her false lips, Harry Granger had sunk back into a chair, resting his arms upon the table, and laying his dark, handsome head upon them, manfully repressing the groan that sprung to his pallid lips.

"I—I am so sorry for you," whispered Dolly, gliding up to the table and laying her hand upon his arm—"more sorry for you than the mere words express."

He made her no answer—neither did he lift his head nor stir from his position. He did not seem to even hear her.

His face was turned partially toward her, and she was frightened at the awful despair that was written on it.

"How he loves Junie Dean," she thought, bitterly. "What a wealth of love he has lavished upon her, while I, blind fool that I was, believed that his every sigh was for me."

A daring thought entered her fertile brain. "Many a man's heart had been caught on the rebound. They had been won through sympathy," she told herself.

She sunk down on a hassock at Harry Granger's feet, murmuring, brokenly, between her stifled sobs, "Oh, Harry—Harry—say that you forgive me for the pain I have caused you, or my heart will surely break! I—I pity you—oh, so much—so much!"

With a beautiful, artful creature like Dolly Carleton, in her long, trailing, silken robe, kneeling at his feet, and sobbing out her pity for him, and begging his forgiveness for bringing a message he had fairly forced from her lips, it was only natural and very human that Harry Granger should obey the impulse of his heart by manfully putting away his own grief and attempting to comfort her as best he could.

"You must not weep for me, Dolly," he said, compassionately, attempting to remove the little white, jeweled hands from her face. "The memories of the past for a moment overcame me, yet it is sweet to know that one true friend has sympathized with me."

He gazed down upon her in wonder at her apparent sorrow and pity for him, and he strove all the harder to comfort her and exonerate her from all blame.

He placed his arm around her, as a brother might have done, and kindly, patiently, put back the fair, tumbled hair from her face, thanking her over and over again for her sweet, sisterly pity.

He did not see the little white-robed figure that had silently opened the door and stood spell-bound on the

threshold, or hear the low, heart-broken mean that rippled over her lips, as her eyes fell on the startling tableau before her, or hear the thrilling, anguished words, "Oh, Harry! my love! my darling! I can stand it no longer—leave her and come to me. I am here, Junie, who loves you so well—oh, pitiful Heaven!—so well. Make good the wrong you have done me, and we can be happy yet!"

Then, like a wounded deer, poor little Junie had turned and fled with a cry wrung from her anguished heart that the very angels up in heaven must have heard and wept over.

"Marie," she cried, pantingly, bursting into the pretty little blue-and-gold boudoir that had been such a sweet haven of rest to her tempest-tossed soul—"oh, Marie, Marie, tell me what I must do! I am going mad! mad! mad! God has surely forgotten me, Marie, and the world has narrowed down to a grave!"

Marie took the little hot, trembling hands in her own, and gently soothed her; but her words of compassion and pity fell on deaf ears.

"Has any one been saying anything unkind to you, Miss Junie?" she asked, hurriedly, eagerly, and scrutinizingly searching Junie's face.

"No, no," groaned the unhappy girl. "I can not tell you what it was that I have just seen; but this I do say: that what I gazed upon has slain me as surely as girl was ever slain. I felt my heart break in one great, terrible throb!"

"You are not well, little Junie!" whispered Marie, hurriedly; "you know not what you are saying. Tell me," she whispered, earnestly, "have you a father or a mother, Junie? If you have, I would advise you to go to them. You were right, long ago, when you wanted to go away. You must go away now, at once. Tell me where your parents live, and perhaps some one will come for you. You are not fit to travel all alone; you are very ill."

"I came here alone, and I can go away all alone. I am not ill in the body, Marie; it is only a terrible, terrible pain in my heart."

Marie cast a strange look upon her, but did not answer.

"I will never go back among those Kentucky hills," murmured Junie, plaintively; "I would die first!"

Little by little Marie drew from her the name of the place where her father lived, and, quite unobserved by Junie, she hastily penciled it down.

And that night a telegram flew over the wires addressed to Farmer Dean, Mayville, Kentucky, which read as follows:

"Junie is here, and in need of you. Take the advice of a friend, and come on at once. MARIE."

The next morning Junie's head ached so badly Marie advised her not to go down to breakfast, and Junie laid her weary head back on the pillow again.

An hour later a servant brought her a basket of exquisite roses, dewy and fragrant, with Arthur's card attached.

"Take them away, Marie," she gasped. "Poor Arthur! I can not endure the sight of his flowers—take them out of my sight, Marie!"

"Shall I destroy them?" asked the girl, caressing the beautiful, fragrant, golden bells. "They are very lovely, Miss Junie."

"No; don't destroy the poor, pretty, innocent things!" exclaimed Junie, fervently. "Take them to your own room, Marie—anywhere out of my sight—and keep them, if you wish!"

"There was another bouquet sent to you this morning, Junie," said Marie, watching keenly the expression that swept over the beautiful, childish face, as she spoke; "a simple cluster of forget-me-nots that Mr. Granger took from the lapel of his coat, and bade me give you; but, ah!

well, well, you must never let him know I told you who sent them, for he made me promise never to tell, and I have told, you see, all forgetful of my word to him."

Like a flash, Junie was on her feet. "Give me the flowers, Marie!" she cried, tremblingly. "I may as well take them—give me the forget-me-nots, if you please."

The tender, yearning love-light that had swept over the lovely young face was pitiful to see.

"She little dreams that I know her secret," thought Marie, as she placed the flowers in the little white, trembling hands, and turned away. Harry Granger's photograph, which Junie had carried concealed in her bosom when she had fainted, told its own story to Marie.

She had quietly replaced the picture without letting Junie know she had seen it. "May Heaven pity the poor little dear!" thought Marie, sadly.

"'Tis always the way with the foolish fair,
They pine for the one who does not care."

For a moment—one sweet, rapturous moment—Junie pressed the fragrant flowers that had lain upon his breast to her throbbing, starving heart.

Then with a pitiful little cry, she flung them from her. "I have no right to them," she sobbed, kneeling down and burying her white face among the torn and scattered blossoms. "He only means to torture me with the memories of the past. Forget me not—oh, would to Heaven that I could forget him!

"Is there a day or an hour that his voice and those dark, burning eyes do not haunt me? What if I should go to Dolly, and tell her that her lover had sent me these flowers!"

She had heard of the falsity of men, but never—oh, never was there one so cruelly false as this dark-eyed, handsome Harry Granger, who had wrecked the happiness of her young life.

At that moment a line among the personals of the morning "Herald" caught her eye, which ran as follows:

"If J—— D—— will communicate with Messrs. Hunt & Berry, Attorneys, Park Row, New York, she will learn of something to her advantage, regarding her suit which is now pending."

"J. D.," she muttered; "I wonder if that could possibly mean me. Shall I go and see, then?" she thought, raising her head up from the forget-me-nots. "I will consider the matter. Perhaps they do not mean me, though."

CHAPTER XXX.

JUNIE raised her hand to her forehead in a dazed, bewildered way.

"J. D.," she murmured; "but, surely, it could not be meant for me!"

She picked up the crushed forget-me-nots, and put them, with the photograph, over her throbbing heart, just in time to escape Marie's keen eye, as that personage entered the room leading little Vic by the hand.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried the child, breaking away from her nurse and rushing up to Junie's side, "something terrible has happened, and I have my step-mamma to thank for it all. You couldn't guess what a terrible thing is to happen to me to-day?"

Two plump little arms were thrown around Junie's neck, and a little tear-stained cheek was pressed close to hers.

"Even babyhood has its own griefs," thought Junie, clasping little Vic close. She whispered, soothingly, as she sat the child down on her lap: "Now tell me what

this terrible calamity is, dear, and perhaps I can help you."

"Papa and mamma are going to take me away to school to-day," sobbed Vic, "and I don't want to go. I want to stay here until after your wedding; that's only a week more, anyhow."

Her wedding! Merciful Heaven! She had quite forgotten it. She had made no preparations for it. She looked so white and startled, little Vic cried out, in alarm:

"Oh, Junie, how white you look! Did you forget that your wedding-day comes in just one week more?" asked the child, curiously. "Why, Arthur never forgets it!" she cried; "he is talking about it all the time, because he loves you so."

A strange, stifled moan broke from Junie's white lips, as she muttered, wearily:

"Poor Arthur, I pity him, and I pity myself!"

"And perhaps Dolly and Mr. Granger will be married at the same time," rattled on the voluble child. "Wouldn't it be funny, Junie, to have two weddings here at the same time? But you would be the prettiest bride, and then wouldn't Dolly be awfully jealous?" laughed Vic, with all a child's uproarious glee.

There was a world of misery in the pitiful young face turned toward Marie.

"Is it really true, Marie, that Mr.—Mr.—Granger is to marry Dolly?" she faltered. "I thought that I once heard he was to marry Louisa Melrose, the banker's daughter."

The voice sounded like no human voice Marie had ever heard before, so hollow, so pitiful, and tremulous.

"I shouldn't wonder if it was true," responded Marie, gently; "but there is a mistake about his engagement to Miss Melrose; that was broken off some time ago, so I understand, and through pique the petulant heiress married

some one else, which leaves handsome Harry Granger free to choose whom he will."

"It matters little to me whether it is Dolly or Miss Melrose," thought Junie, bitterly.

"But you didn't tell me if you thought a double wedding would be nice," persisted Vic.

"Come away, Vic," called Marie; "you must not tease Miss Junie. You are to come away with me, and pick up your school-books," and half dragging, half carrying the child, Marie bore her triumphantly from the room.

When Junie was alone, she rose from her chair and paced the room up and down excitedly, trying to think the matter out clearly which way she should go, for she must leave at once.

It was a pity to deceive poor Arthur so, for she could never, never marry him, and the very sight of the love written upon his face when he gazed upon her made her tremble, and she shrunk from the trying moment when she should have to confess to him that she did not love him, and could never marry him.

Down in the garden below she heard Dolly's voice, in low, earnest conversation with Irene. Dolly held a paper in her hand, and her eyes had a malicious gleam in them as she asked, suddenly:

"Well, what do you think of it, Irene? Shall we send a note to Squire Granger and his bride to visit us here, or shall we order the coupé and go to the hotel and call upon them?"

"We will call upon them at the hotel," said Irene, moodily.

"We may be having our journey for our pains," pouted Dolly. "Uncles never know anything of the love affairs of their nephews—they are not expected to."

"But he may know some secret connected with Junie Dean's past life," replied Irene—"something that might turn Arthur Seymour from her. That is my only hope.

He is proud of his honor, proud of his spotless reputation, and, no matter how much he loved her, he would cast her from him if we could in some way convince him that her life has not been blameless."

And so the two sisters settled it, and an hour later they were in the parlor of the Astor House, having just sent up their cards requesting an interview with Squire Granger and his bride, which was readily granted them.

The interview lasted over an hour, and when the two sisters re-entered their coupé Dolly Carleton's face, in its baffled despair and anger, was a terrible study, contrasting strangely with the fiendish gleam that lighted up Irene's proud face.

"She was his wife!" muttered Dolly. "Who would ever have thought such a terrible secret existed between them? But I can not understand why they are separated, if they love each other, and I suppose I never shall know unless I wring it from her lips!"

"You ought to be thankful that he is legally free from Junie Dean," replied Irene, "and let well enough alone."

"I understand why he sent her the four-leaved clover now!" cried Dolly, bitterly. "That faded flower probably played some very important part in 'love's young dream.'"

"There is something else I have discovered," said Irene, slowly. "Did you notice Squire Granger called his bride Fanny? And that was the name of Junie Dean's sister. Although she is dark, yet I can trace a faint resemblance between her and Junie. Did you notice how nervous she was when I told Squire Granger that his nephew was visiting us? how they exchanged glances of dismay, and how white they grew as I answered, distinctly, 'Yes, Harry Granger has been visiting us for a month or more?' and how guilty she looked as the squire muttered, almost under his breath, 'What! Harry Granger and Junie Dean under one roof? Surely you are ~~asking~~!'"

"Of course I kept my eyes and ears open and noticed it all," said Dolly, "and I flatter myself I used a great deal of strategy and diplomacy in drawing from the revengeful squire's lips, in spite of his wife's warning glances, the story of his nephew's romantic elopement and marriage with Junie Dean, after binding us solemnly never to reveal we knew it."

"But I am satisfied they have kept the main facts back from us," declared Irene.

"Then there is but one way, and one way only, of finding them out," answered Dolly, leaning back in the carriage and closing her eyelids over her steel-blue eyes. "And that is, as I said before, to wring it from the girl's own lips."

Junie is standing at her window as Irene and Dolly drive up to the porch, and they both notice with keen interest how fair and childish she looks, with the sunshine falling in a flood of mellow light upon her golden hair, and upon the crimson roses that twine about the casement like a floral frame.

"If I could but spoil her fair, dainty beauty," Dolly flashes out under her breath, "I would do it."

Irene shares her sentiments fully, but she does not reveal the dark, cruel plan she has been brooding over to sweep the lovely, fair young girl at the window forever from her path.

Like a cautious general, she has silently laid her plans, and when once the coil she had woven fastened itself around her victim there would be no escape.

Junie watches Dolly's face with wistful earnestness from her rose-embowered window.

"I must tell Dolly to-night," she sighs, desperately, "and then I will go away."

She sees Harry Granger walk down to the steps and hand Dolly out, holding his arms about her a moment or two longer than is really necessary. "He loves her,"

thought Junie, shrinking back from the window, dizzy and sick.

She never dreamed Harry Granger had been watching her face from among the trees for long hours, and this slight attention to Dolly had been enacted solely for her benefit.

He was determined that she should see that others appreciated him, while she had ruthlessly cast him out of her life forever.

Junie remembers it is Dolly's custom to walk in the garden on pleasant moonlight nights, and she resolves to seek her there to-night, and warn her of the fickleness of Harry Granger's love.

While Junie paces up and down her room, the sun goes down and the moon creeps up. She catches up a thick shawl and wraps it quickly about her, fitting silently as a shadow out of the house, through the moonlight toward the dark shadows beyond, utterly unconscious of the stealthy figure of a woman gliding swiftly after her, until a hand is laid heavily upon her shoulder.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE hand tightened its hold upon the girl's shoulder; but something in the hoarse voice causes Junie to lose the dread fear that, for a moment, swept over her.

The grounds in which they are standing is shaded with great, overarching trees; but a small ray of moonlight drifts between the branches and falls upon the woman's face.

Junie stands quite still for a moment, and the words "Sister Fanny!" break from her lips in a faint cry.

"Yes, I am Fanny," replies her companion, coolly. "The sister whom you tricked out of her lover, who, in turn, cast you adrift. You are well repaid, I take it, for that little affair."

"Don't, don't, Fanny!" cries Junie, piteously, kneeling before her. "If you only knew how I have suffered, sister, you could not find it in your heart to upbraid me; you could only pity me—your poor, unhappy sister Junie."

"Pity you!" repeats Fanny, with fine, mocking scorn. "No, no! you mistake me; all pity for you is dead. You had no pity for me, or the blow to my pride, when you stole from me my handsome lover; and I said to myself I would bide my time, and revenge would surely come to me; and it did, for your happiness was short-lived."

"But I was so young, Fanny," pleaded Junie, in a husky, startled voice. "I believed that he loved me, and I never knew that true love could die; but oh, I have learned such a cruel lesson! Listen, Fanny, and I will tell you all the whole cruel story, the most pitiful that ever girl had to tell."

No gleam of pity softened the cold, stern face of Fanny as she met the earnest gaze of the blue eyes, swimming in tears, raised to her own.

"From the first moment Harry Granger and I met, I—I loved him," faltered Junie; "he was so kind, so winning, so different from any one I had ever seen before. He taught me to love him, and the lesson was not hard to learn. Our meeting was so romantic! And, as the days passed, I suddenly realized how dark my future would be if I were to lose him, and when a day passed and I did not see him at our trysting-place, I set that day down as one that had no sunshine in it.

"You remember, Fanny, how you tried to force me to marry Squire Granger to save the farm. Forgive me; I—I told Harry of it, and he cried out: 'You shall never marry him, Junie! There is a way of preventing it—marry me, Junie—marry me to-night—now!' It was all so sudden, and I loved him so," pleaded the girl, plaintively, "that I consented."

"We were married at midnight," she went on, "and Harry brought me here to New York.

"Then followed a short, happy week that flew by on golden wings; and then, Fanny, came the terrible blow that nearly deprived me of reason. We parted one morning with the tenderest words and caresses; but Harry would not tell me where he was going. But, upon the floor, soon after he was gone, I found a note which explained all. Some one had sent for him to come to them; and the name signed to the note was 'Lou.'

"All that night he did not come back to me," sobbed Junie, "and the night closed in darkly around me; still he did not return. But on the morrow he came. When first my eyes met his, as he stood on the threshold with outstretched arms, I felt that some terrible change had come over him. My arms fell away from his neck, and his kisses turned cold on my lips. Oh, Fanny, I could never explain to you the horror of that moment. It was my Harry, yet, oh, so strangely cold and strange! There was no love in the dark, magnetic, wicked eyes gazing down into mine, and his breath upon my cheek made me shrink from him in sudden terror, as it had never done before."

"And yet he was Harry Granger, your husband?" said Fanny, hardly breathing in her intensity to catch Junie's answer.

"Yes," said Junie, with a shudder; "it was Harry, yet strangely changed."

"How cleverly Harry's twin brother Henry must have enacted that scene to hoodwink the sharp eyes of love so successfully," muttered Fanny, under her breath.

"I accused him of leaving me for this unknown Lou," Junie went on, twitching her fingers nervously together, and the great pearly drops falling from her blue eyes like rain, "and it was then that he spoke the words that stabbed me to the heart more cruelly than a murderer's

knife could have done. He turned upon me, and with a look I shall never forget, he cried out, 'I shall brook no interference in my affairs. You must not dictate to me, Junie Dean. I am free to love whom I will, and I do love Lou—why should I not confess it?'

" 'I am not Junie Dean,' I answered, proudly, 'I am Junie Granger, your wife, and I deny your right to love whom you please.'

"It was then that the most satanic laugh that ever broke from a man's lips fell from his.

" 'It may be as well to tell you the startling truth now as to wait longer,' he cried, tauntingly, still holding me in his cruel embrace; 'know the truth, then, Junie, I have deceived you—you are not my wife; can you understand me?'

" 'You are my husband; you married me,' I gasped, clinging to him as a child clings to some strong arm to protect it.

" 'No,' he cried, unclasping my arms from about him, 'you are not my wife, Junie; it was only a mock marriage. I would never have told you, but you have wrung the truth from my lips. I pity you, but pity will not make you my wife.'

"I knelt at his feet and begged him not to jest so cruelly with me; it was unkind—unmanly to frighten me so.

" 'My dear child, do not take it so much to heart,' he cried; 'go back to the farm again and learn to forget me. Heaven knows I repent of my rashness, Junie, but it is the truth—you are not my wife.'

"Oh, how I flung myself at his feet, Fanny, with a terrible, heart-broken cry! How I knelt and begged and prayed to him, Fanny, to strike me dead at his feet and end the life he had so cruelly blighted! Oh, the pity of it, the pity of it, Fanny! No young girl ever had such a broken love-dream; no young girl had ever known such row," wailed Junie, crouching still lower in the grass

at Fanny's feet. "He turned on his heel and left me, Fanny, left me to die of a broken heart; left me as one would toss ruthlessly aside a broken, withered flower, without one backward glance."

"Did you follow him here?" asked Fanny, tauntingly. "How is it you are both here?"

Junie drew her slight figure up to her full height, with the offended dignity of a young queen.

"Our meeting here was purely accidental," cried Junie, tremulously. "I saved the life of Mr. Markham's child, and I accepted a home here with them. Harry Granger was invited here as a guest, and from the moment we met beneath this roof we have held aloof from each other. No one here guesses the terrible secret that lies between us, and no one ever shall know, for I am going away—going away to the other end of the world."

"Has Harry Granger any relatives that you know of?" asked Fanny, gazing down into the white, tear-stained face before her. "Has he a brother or father?"

"He told me once that his father was dead," replied Junie, "and I have never heard him mention having a brother."

A look of intense relief stole over Fanny's face.

"She never shall know that he has a twin brother," she thought, exultingly. "Junie," she said, raising the crouching, kneeling figure at her feet, "I felt bitter with you at first, but since I have heard how cruelly Harry used you, that bitterness has turned to pity. You have been an erring, willful little sister, but I forgive you."

She never forgot the quivering, thankful cry that broke from Junie's lips, as little Junie sprang into her arms, covering the face of her false, designing sister with grateful kisses. Then Fanny went on, slowly:

"First of all, I must tell you that I am Squire Granger's wife. Do not pity me," she cried, recklessly, arresting the cry of astonishment that trembled on Junie's

lips. "When I knew all hope of winning Harry Granger was over, I married his wealthy uncle for revenge—yes, revenge. I have every luxury that wealth can buy," she went on, hoarsely, "coaches, silks, and jewels, and I am satisfied; for I knew Harry Granger could never inherit his wealth if he married."

"Is Squire Granger here, too?" asked Junie, in sudden terror. "Oh, Fanny, save me from him! Do not let him see me, do not tell him I am here! He hates me, Fanny, and even though he is married to you, he would take a cruel revenge upon me!"

"There is but one way to prevent it," replied Fanny, with a cruel gleam in her eyes as she bent over her cowering sister; "shall I name it?"

CHAPTER XXXII.

JUNIE raised her blue eyes wonderingly to her sister's face.

"I do not understand what you mean, Fanny," she gasped, watching her sister's dark, glittering eyes and the hard, cruel expression that was settling around her lips. "Squire Granger is very revengeful, Fanny. There is nothing I could do to gain his good-will again. He hates me."

"He will soon have cause to hate you even worse than he does now," returned Fanny, significantly.

The velvety blue eyes expanded wonderingly; all the lovely color died out of Junie's pink, dimpled cheeks, and the little white hands that clutched Fanny's shawl trembled violently.

"Get up from your knees, Junie," said Fanny, pushing the white, clinging little hands away. "Get up and listen to what I am going to say to you, and stop crying so babyishly. The time for that is over long ago."

As in the old childhood days at the farm-house, Fanny

had always possessed a strange subtle influence over her younger sister, and Junie obeyed her by rising slowly to her feet and standing before her.

Fanny half pushed her to a seat on a mossy log, and seated herself beside her.

"Sit down," she said; "we can talk better. I have met Irene and Dolly Carleton—I shall not tell you when or where," went on Fanny, hurriedly—"and it was from them I learned of your whereabouts, and I learned of something else too," she continued, excitedly, "and that was, that you were soon to marry Mr. Markham's nephew, Arthur Seymour. And I must congratulate you, Junie. It is the most sensible step you could have taken."

"Stop! stop! Fanny!" cried Junie, piteously, throwing up her hands with a childish cry. "I can never marry Arthur. I am going to run away from here this very night to escape him. On the spur of the moment I accepted Arthur, and I have regretted it ever since, for my heart can never be his. I am not strong enough to face his anger when he discovers it, so I am going to go quietly away to the other end of the world, where no one will ever know me."

"You will do nothing of the kind," exclaimed Fanny, excitedly. "You will not run away. You shall stay here and marry Arthur Seymour at once. You must do it, Junie."

The pain on the white, young face grew deeper. She shrunk away from Fanny with sudden dread in her pansy-blue eyes.

"I would die first, Fanny," she cried, desperately. "Arthur is all that is good and kind, but I do not love him, and it is a sin to marry without love, a sin that would shadow all my after-life."

The laugh that rose to Fanny's lips was not pleasant to hear as she suddenly turned around and faced her.

"Is it because you love Harry Granger still that you re-

fuse to accept Arthur?" she hissed. "Tell me, girl, am I right?"

Junie's quivering, crimson lips and the intense pain that crept into those blue eyes that were drowned in tears, answered her better than any words could have done.

"I see how it is," cried Fanny, hoarsely; "you have romantic notions in your head of a reconciliation; but, let me tell you, girl, that your hopes are vain. Harry Granger will be nothing to you—he despises you. You are mad to hope he will yet love one whom he once wearied of and cast aside."

"I never hoped it," sighed Junie, drearily. "I knew that all the brightness and sweetness of love had gone out of my life, but I will be truthful with you, Fanny, and tell you that I love Harry Granger still. It may be a mad, hopeless love, as you say, but it is a part of my life, Fanny—a part of my very soul. I can not tear it out of my heart, for every heart-throb is for him. I could die for him, I love him so."

Junie's voice had sunk to a thrilling whisper, and her throbbing bosom rose and fell tumultuously, as the heart-broken confession trembled upon her lips. She held out her hands toward the distant light in Harry Granger's window, repeating, drearily: "He was cruelly false, but I can not help loving him still. He was my world; oh, Harry! Harry!"

The cold, hard glitter deepened in Fanny's eyes.

"It is too late to waste useless affection now, for the time has come for you to act. Ere long your name will be bandied around from lip to lip with cruel sneers. You will be turned out into the street with the bitterest scorn. You can not fly from the consequences of your own mad folly. There is but one way: you must marry Arthur Seymour at once, and he must take you far away from here."

Junie's lovely face grew still whiter in the dim starlight, and her eyes fell beneath the piercing gaze bent upon her.

"Shall I tell you why you must do this?" hissed Fanny, seizing the trembling girl by both shoulders, and gazing down into the downcast eyes and burning face before her.

"Listen, then," she cried, bending her face close down, and whispering a few words rapidly in Junie's ear.

They were but a few words, yet they produced the most startling effect upon hapless, unhappy Junie.

Her white lips opened with the bitterest wailing cry that was ever wrung from a tortured young heart.

"Have pity, Fanny," she gasped; "pity, pity!"

"It is not a question of pity, but a question of honor," retorted Fanny, sharply; "yet you do not seem to grasp fully the terrible import of it.

"You have broken your mother's heart, and now would you bring down the white hairs of your father, in the blackest disgrace, in his old age, and make your sister weep with very shame for the tie that bound her to you?"

Another cry more bitter than the first issued from Junie's white lips—a cry that the angels up in heaven must have heard and wept over. Like a hunted deer suddenly brought to bay on the very brink of a chasm, little Junie turned suddenly about and faced her cruel, designing sister.

"Do you want to drive your poor, unhappy sister Junie mad?" she wailed, brokenly. "I can go away somewhere and lie down and die!" she murmured, plaintively. "I have always been a good girl!" she cried out, with touching pathos, that would have melted a heart of stone. "I never knowingly did a wrong. I never committed a sin. My life was a sweet, unbroken, childish dream until love clouded it with its dark wing. Then why has God poured down such vials of wrath upon my head? Other young girls love and are happy. Their love is the crowning blessing of their lives. Why, then, was it denied me?"

"That is not the question we were discussing," returned Fanny, coldly, turning restlessly the gleaming diamonds that sparkled on her slim, taper fingers. "You are face to face, Junie, with quite another matter."

Only the tremulous, heart-broken sobs of the girl answered her.

"I will place an insurmountable barrier between Harry Granger and her forever," she thought, wickedly, gazing down at the wretched little figure crouching among the daisies at her feet. "She shall marry Arthur Seymour, if I have to move heaven and earth to accomplish it."

She had daringly brought to bear the strongest argument that could ever have been invented by a wicked, scheming woman to torture her young sister into compliance with her deep-laid plans.

"This wedding must come off, Junie," she said, determinedly. "You must save the family honor by marrying Arthur Seymour at once!"

Like one who has struggled against the tide until her strength is gone, Junie knelt in the long, dewy grasses and listened despairingly to Fanny's cruel, taunting words.

"You must marry Arthur Seymour!" hisses Fanny. Then she turns, and, without one glance or caress upon the beautiful white face upturned to the starlit sky, hastily leaves the garden, with a smile upon her lips, as she muttered, "The chasm between Harry Granger and Junie widens. If I can not have his love, I will inherit the wealth that might have been his. I will spoil his life, and at the moment when his anguish is keenest, then I will confront him, saying, 'Ha! proud, haughty Harry Granger, had you chosen me, all would have gone well with you. But you chose Junie, with her fair, baby face and childish ways, and behold, I have torn you asunder! I have plotted and planned, using the old squire, with his money, a willing tool in my hands. You shall taste my

vengeance to the full for choosing Junie instead of me! and 'next to love, revenge is sweet!'"

Suddenly she stopped short in the path. Was it fancy, or did some one really call her name? She listened intently, and the faint echo was repeated.

CHAPTER XXXIII

LIKE a poor little wounded bird whom the cruel sportsman has wantonly shot down, and left to die in the grass, poor little Junie, the child-bride of a week, lay moaning among the pitying daisies; crying out to the starlit heavens that "life was too hard to bear, and she must end it all by her own hands."

"Every one is against me," she wailed, "and I would be glad to die."

A shadow fell between her and the soft, white moonlight, a step fell noiselessly on the green, velvet grass; but Junie neither saw nor heard.

Some one touched the little icy-cold hands that were locked so desperately together over her breast, and a voice, that thrilled her to the very heart core, murmured "Junie."

In a moment she was on her feet. The one thing she had feared most and dreaded had happened to her at last.

She stood face to face with Harry Granger; they two were alone together, out in the moonlit garden, gazing in each other's face.

For one brief moment the silence between them, which seemed the length of eternity to both of them, remained unbroken.

"Junie," he said, at length, taking a step forward—"Junie."

At that instant all the outraged pride in her nature arose.

She turned upon him as haughtily as a young queen

might have done, and would have fled precipitately to the house had he not stepped directly into the path before her, cutting off all escape.

"Junie," he said, in a voice hoarse with emotion, "I have long waited for just such an opportunity as this to speak with you, but you have always eluded me, and I felt that I must speak to you or die. I—I—love you so still."

He looked at her with a wistful, piteous glance, all of his soul in his dark, mournful eyes.

The lovely young face upon which he gazed flushed and paled in the bright, white starlight, as the word love fell from his lips.

Love! He dare speak of his love to her! he who had cast her so cruelly out of his life, after deceiving her so pitifully with that blackest of all black crimes—a mock marriage.

Junie's anger and indignation were most violent; they outweighed her despair.

She held up her little white, trembling hands with a bitter, sobbing laugh that sounded pitiful from such beautiful lips.

"Pray do not speak of love," she cried out, angrily. "As I understand the word, you know nothing of it. When men love they spare and are merciful, and you—Heaven help me—you had no pity upon me—none. You have blighted and spoiled my whole life, and I can never forgive you while life lasts."

He retreated a step, and looked at her wonderingly. His dark, handsome face had grown strangely pale, and the quivering of his lips, strong man though he was, showed how keenly each word she uttered pierced his proud heart.

The wonder in his eyes deepened. He knew he had urged and persuaded her to elope from the farm and marry him, but he did not see why that should have spoiled her life; his own mighty, absorbing love had prompted the

steps, and he had so truly believed that little Junie had loved him.

"I was only a child," she went on, huskily, "and you knew I did not know the ways of the world. I believed and trusted you, and I found to my bitter cost how cruelly I had been deceived—you were not what you seemed."

Something like a sob broke from Harry Granger's white lips; he leaned back heavily against a tree, crossing his arms across his heaving, broad chest.

"You are cruelly hard, Junie," he said—"so terribly hard. I did not know you despised me so utterly as I see you do. I loved you madly, passionately, and, so help me Heaven, I did not think of what I did when I persuaded you to that step. I knew you were young and childish, and I thought my love would excuse it. Oh, Junie," he pleaded, "do not be so hard upon me. See, I am kneeling, praying to you for one kind word. Give me that and I will go away. I will go the utmost ends of the earth, where no sight of me will ever trouble you again. It will not cost you much, and, for the sake of what we have been to each other, I pray you for just one kind word."

He could not understand why the bright, blue eyes flashed so darkly, why her pale face crimsoned so painfully and deepened into a glance of unutterable horror and scorn, as the words "what we have been to each other" fell from his lips.

She was thinking that he referred to that dark past to taunt and annoy her. How dare he plead for one kind word from lips that should curse his treachery.

"I shall never speak that one word," cried Junie, haughtily. "What right have you, who have marred my whole life, to ask one kind word from me? When I forget that I may speak kindly to you, never until then. Such a wrong as you did me deserves no pardon—can have none," she went on, pitilessly.

A low cry broke over his lips. The enormity of the

charge she had brought against him never struck him in the same light before.

The whole head and front of his offense was that he had prayed, entreated, and persuaded her to marry him, because he loved her so madly, so deeply, so truly, and, to save his life, he could not see even now that he had done such a cruel thing as she seemed to imagine, after all.

Other young fellows had persuaded young girls to marry them on the spur of the moment—girls as young as Junie was—and their pretty romances had not turned out as hardly as his. They had had a pleasant enough life of it for that one short, happy week, and he had been so sure his child-bride loved him.

"You never loved me, Junie, even from the first," he replied, bitterly, "and some day you may repent of your treatment of me."

She looked at Harry as he spoke—at the handsome face, the dark, magnetic, mournful eyes, dim with tears—and a great longing swept over her to feel the clasp of his arms around her once again—just one little moment.

Oh, dear Heaven! how cruel it was to hold aloof from his embrace when her poor little heart was hungering so pitifully for just one caress! It would be just one short, sweet, happy moment out of a life-time.

Then she remembered that scene in the hotel—how she had knelt and prayed and begged on her knees to him, and he had coldly refused her prayer to right the wrong that he had done.

"Let me remember it!" she cried out to herself, "and it will help to steel my heart against him. Let me remember how I loved him, and how he left me to die of a broken heart!"

"You must listen to me, Junie!" cried Harry Granger, encouraged by her silence. "You must tell me—"

"Must!" echoed Junie, scornfully. "I do not recognize your right to dictate what I must or must not do.

You will please allow me to pass, Mr. Granger. Do not detain me, for Mr. Arthur Seymour, the gentleman I am soon to marry, would object to my presence here with you, I feel sure."

The words that were on Harry Granger's lips died away, making no sound. He had been on the point of asking for an explanation as to why she ran away from him and secured a legal separation—what he had done to change her so.

Oh, cruel, sportive fate! If he only had spoken those words, what a world of misery might have been spared them both! Startling explanations would have followed, and the dastardly, cruel plot Henry Granger (poor Harry's twin brother) had so cleverly managed would have been revealed.

"Then it is quite true that you are to marry Arthur Seymour, Junie?" gasped Harry, brokenly. "My God, it can not, must not be!"

"It is quite true," replied Junie, gathering up her lace skirts daintily around her, as she made a movement to pass him.

"But you do not love him?" cried Harry, eagerly. "If there is one spark of the old sweet love-dream left in your heart for me, turn to me, Junie!"

All the old sweet, bewildering witchery of love's young dream seemed to draw her yearningly toward him. Ah, Heaven help her! She had loved him so well—so well!

He held out his arms to her, with a radiant smile, as he breathlessly murmured her name.

"He has deceived me once," she thought, confusedly. "I must never trust him again. It would be the maddest of folly. No, no; my heart must not relent. I must be hard and pitiless. My only safety is in instant flight."

There was one brief moment of breathless, thrilling hesitancy; then, fearful of her own weakness, Junie dashed past him, up the rose-bordered walk, on to the

house, just as a dark-robed figure crept stealthily down the walk.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HARRY GRANGER stood quite still where she had left him, gazing regretfully after Junie's white-robed figure, as she disappeared from sight, leaving him more wretched than he had ever thought he should be in this world again.

"If there is one thing a man can not thoroughly understand, that one thing is a woman's heart," he mused.

He tried to think what he had ever said or done to displease her. He remembered but too well their tender parting on that fateful June morning when he went down to the steamer to see his friend, Louis Arnold, off. He remembered how Junie, his pretty little bride, had clung around his neck, telling him, in her pretty, artless, childish way, how very, very lonely she would be while he was away, and that he must come back soon to her.

What man in the wide, wide world would have predicted such a future for Harry and his bride as had come to them? They could not have been severed more completely if one of them were lying cold and dead on that bright, starlit night! Their pleasure had, indeed, been short-lived.

It had been a puzzle to Harry to know just why Junie had fled from him. It seemed all plain enough to him now.

Junie had repented of her hasty marriage. She had grown weary of him, as a child wearies of a new toy, and took advantage of his absence of a day to fly from him.

And he wondered if he really had spoiled her young life, as she had so vehemently declared. He could not see that he had been so much at fault. He loved little Junie so, and he would have made every effort in his power to have made her the happiest of little brides. What young husband could have done more?

"I was mad to linger when I found that she was here," muttered Harry, bitterly. "How can I stay here and witness the ceremony that will give her to another? My brain would reel. I would not be accountable for anything that might happen, even if it ended in a tragedy."

A slow, creeping step sounded on the grass beside him, but, so engrossed was Harry in his own thoughts, he did not even hear it, nor was he aware of another's presence until a hand was laid heavily on his shoulder, and a hoarse voice said, quite close to his ear:

"Don't be startled, Harry; I simply want to have a talk with you."

Harry wheeled suddenly about, and an exclamation of surprise broke from his lips as he saw, standing directly in the path before him, his twin brother, Henry Granger!

For a moment the twin brothers regarded each other in silence.

"I suppose you are surprised to see me," said Henry Granger, with a forced laugh; "and, judging from your reception of me, my presence here is not very agreeable to you."

"It is seldom you seek my society," replied Harry, gravely, gazing earnestly at the dissipated face of his brother. "May I ask to what I am indebted for this stealthy visit? Are you in trouble again, Henry? Have you been gambling? What is it?"

Again that hard, forced laugh which was so unpleasant to hear, burst from Henry's lips, as his bold eyes fell un-
easily beneath Harry Granger's keen, searching glance.

"I want money," replied Henry, "and I must have it. I've been in hard luck lately, and if I can once get on my feet again, I'll be able to stem the tide in safety."

"If it's for a gambling debt, you shall not have one dollar of my money for that purpose," declared Harry, haughtily. "You have had the same chance to make

your way in the world that I have; it's your own fault if you have not succeeded."

"I am not here to discuss that point," returned Henry, hotly. "And if I ask your money I am ready and willing to give you value received."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Harry, in amazement, gazing at the wine-flushed face, and feverishly bright eyes of his brother. "I do not comprehend your meaning."

"Let us walk on down the path," replied Henry, hurriedly, "and we can talk without fear of interruption as we go."

For some moments they walked on together in silence.

Henry Granger had nerved himself to make the fatal revelation of how cruelly poor little Junie had been deceived. But now that the dread moment had arrived, he felt himself unequal to the task he had assigned himself, and, guilty coward that he was, he dreaded the terrible wrath of his brother, which would be so sure to follow. There could be no pardon for what he had done; he knew better than to expect it.

For an hour or more they paced the garden, talking as they walked.

"I shall not tell him to-night," was Henry's mental comment. "If he gives me the money I ask for, I will write him on the morrow, confessing all; if he refuses, he shall suffer for it. I am in a desperate strait, and money I must have, and will have at any cost."

"Well," said Harry, impatiently, seeing that his brother Henry was in no hurry to speak, "let us get at the head and front of this matter at once. What is it that you wish the money for, and how much do you want?"

Henry Granger breathed freer. "I want a thousand dollars to clear the country," he replied. "Everything has gone against me, and New York is no place for me. I

can not keep away from gambling with the influence of old associates around me."

"I thought you were to marry Louise Melrose, the banker's daughter," said Harry, thoughtfully.

"That was broken off months ago," replied Henry. "Some enemy informed her of my gambling propensity, and, through pique, she refused to see me or listen to an explanation; and on the heels of that followed the announcement of her marriage to another."

"Well," replied Harry, reflectively, "you should not lose all hope. You are to be Squire Granger's heir; surely he will help you in your present difficulty if you were to apply to him."

The rage and intense anger that distorted Henry Granger's dark face in a single instant was frightful to behold.

"Squire Granger's heir!" he fairly hissed, wheeling about suddenly in the path; "both you and I, Harry, have lost all chance of ever inheriting one dollar of the squire's money, for he has married, and every dollar is settled upon his wife. Yes," continued Henry, with intense wrath in his voice, "he married Fanny Dean, your sister-in-law, by the way, and he has led a hard life of it ever since. He would not dare ask her for a dollar for me; if he did, she would turn him out of the house."

Fanny Dean! how the name recalled all those bitter-sweet memories of the old days at the farm in Harry's mind—those days he had passed down by the side of the babbling brook, wooing pretty little Junie Dean.

"I have never been a loving brother to you, Harry," exclaimed Henry Granger, with emotion; "if you knew the low depths to which I have sunk and what I dared lend myself to you would curse me; but let me have the money, Harry, and I swear to you that I will right the terrible wrong I have done."

It never once occurred to Harry Granger that he was in any way connected with the terrible wrong his brother spoke

of, and, like the generous, impulsive brother that he was, Harry immediately filled out a check for the required amount, which he placed in his brother Henry's hand.

Again the words he had come there to speak trembled on the false twin brother's lips, and again his cowardly nature asserted itself, sealing his lips in silence.

"I could not confess such a dastardly deed face to face with him," muttered Henry. "I will write to him to-morrow and make a clean breast of it."

Oh, if the sighing breeze, waving the green branches of the trees above their heads, could have pleaded with Henry Granger to reveal then and there the fatal secret that was locked in his guilty conscience, how much misery might have been spared two broken hearts!

"To-morrow," he muttered, "he shall know it."

Alas! how little he knew how many to-morrows would elapse, freighted with the keenest anguish mortal could ever endure, before that dread secret would burst forth upon the startled world.

At the entrance gate the two brothers parted, Harry returning to the house, and Henry Granger walking rapidly away in an opposite direction.

"My first move will be to find Junie," thought Henry Granger; "days and weeks and months have I searched for her, but she seems to cleverly elude me. Poor little bride, how cruelly I deceived her."

He was threading his way through one of the business streets of the great city, and happening to raise his eyes to a sign-board directly in front of him, he read the names, "Hunt & Berry, attorneys at law."

For a moment he stood quite still, and pondered.

"Heavens!" he ejaculated, nervously, "those are the attorneys to whom the squire applied to secure Junie's legal separation from Harry. Surely they must know her whereabouts."

CHAPTER XXXV.

LIKE one who had put love and happiness forever beyond her reach in this world, little Junie fled hurriedly up the path, striving to put all the distance she could between herself and Harry, lest she be tempted to turn back and fly to him, crying out, "Oh, my love, my love! take me back to your heart, for I can not live without you."

In the corridor she met Arthur Seymour face to face, and, had it not been for this inopportune encounter, the whole course of her after-life might have been different.

"Where have you been, Junie, my darling?" he cried, clasping the shrinking little figure closer in his arms, and gazing in wonder at the flushed cheeks and tear-drowned blue eyes. "Why, Junie, my love, you have been crying."

He drew her into the library as he spoke, placing her upon the sofa, and seating himself beside her.

"Now tell me what it is that troubles my little bride to be," murmured Arthur, gently imprisoning both of the little white, fluttering hands. "You must have no secrets from me, Junie. No cloud shall darken the sunshine of your life if I can avert it, little love; so be frank with me now, and tell me what troubles my little Junie?"

Junie's cheeks flamed, and her breath came quick and sharp, and she struggled out of his arms with a heart-broken, sobbing cry.

The sight of her grief was too much for Arthur. His heart, strong with all a man's fiery passion, became impatient of restraint, and defied control.

He clasped her in his arms again, in spite of her struggles to resist him, covering her face, her lips, and her beautiful golden hair with passionate kisses, murmuring how dear she was to him.

"Don't, Arthur, don't," she gasped. "I—I wanted to

ask you something—while—I—I—have the strength and courage to do it.”

In a moment Arthur was all attention. He ceased kissing the rosy, quivering lips, but he still held her in a close embrace.

“Well, now, Junie, I am listening more than patiently,” he began. “Now tell me what it is that troubles you.”

He could not help but think how pretty and lovable she looked in the soft mellow glow of the shaded gas-light—in her dainty dress of spotless, fleecy white, with the cluster of dewy, velvety violets on her heaving breast and in her golden curls.

Once or twice she began to speak, but each time her embarrassment overcame her, and she hid her face, which was suffused with the deepest flaming scarlet, in her trembling hands.

“A week from to-day is our wedding-day,” Junie faltered (thinking of the terrible warning—ay, commanding words Fanny had hissed in her ear), “and—I—I—wanted to ask you if it could—if you thought it—would—be right—to change the date,” she stammered.

A grave paleness settled instantly over Arthur Seymour's face. “I do not see the necessity for such an action, Junie,” he responded, promptly; “indeed, my patience to claim you for my bride was exhausted long ago. I would do anything in the wide world to please you, little girl, but I really can not consent to any such arrangement as to having our wedding-day postponed.”

“I—I did not quite mean that,” faltered Junie, her face crimsoning still deeper. “I wanted to ask you if we could be married to-morrow instead of waiting a week more. Oh, I must get away from here at once,” she cried, with a wild, despairing cry, “or I shall go mad with the torture of it.”

Arthur Seymour could scarcely believe that he had

heard aright. The first words she had uttered had startled and delighted him so that he had not heard the last of her sentence. His dark, magnetic eyes fairly glowed.

"I shall only be too delighted to acquiesce in a proposition of that kind," cried Arthur, his ruddy face fairly beaming with delight. "Why, do you know, Junie," he went on, gayly, "this is the first time you have even seemed interested in our wedding. I half believed you did not care for me, and I was beginning to grow desperately jealous lest I had some unknown rival."

He drew her down again on the sofa by his side, and he smiled, thinking it was her pretty bashfulness that made her shrink so desperately from his fond caresses.

"To-morrow let it be, then, my sweet one," he went on, tenderly. "I am beginning to think now that my little Junie really does care for me a little, after all."

"You will take me far away from here, Arthur?" she whispered, gazing up piteously into his face. "Take me away to the other end of the earth and hide me. I am so tired—oh, so tired of the cold, pitiless world!"

It never occurred to Arthur but that all young girls had just such thoughts as their wedding-day drew near.

"Hide you? Indeed, I shall do no such thing," he replied, laughingly, taking the lovely, fair young face between his hands, and gazing into it with all a young lover's rapturous fondness. "I shall be altogether too proud of my Junie for that. We shall lead a gay, bright life. There is one thing that pleases me beyond all else, and that is the thought that I have been your first and only lover, Junie."

He could feel the little trembling hands he held clasped so tightly turn icy cold.

"Some men have a sort of mania upon one subject and some one another," he pursued, reflectively. "Mine seems to have been to choose no love who had known another lover's kisses. I admit that jealousy is my besetting

sin, Junie, and my prejudice in this respect is so strong I am quite sure that it would outweigh my love."

When Junie had first entered the room, the impulse had been strong upon her to confess to Arthur the dark secret that shadowed her young life, and throw herself upon his mercy and protection.

"If I should confess now, after what he has just said, I would know what to expect," she thought, confusedly; "he would turn from me coldly, scornfully, like all the rest of the world, and without even one friend to cling to I should be lost indeed."

Junie was growing desperately reckless. When all the sweetness of life and love seem hopelessly lost to a woman, she will throw herself madly into the vortex of Fate's relentless ocean, caring little which way her bark drifts on the hungry sea of life.

He led Junie to the door, tenderly kissing her good-night.

"It is after ten o'clock, dear," he whispered, "and these blue eyes must soon be closed in slumber if you would not lose your beauty sleep, and be a pale little bride to-morrow."

Arthur raised her little white trembling fingers to his lips for an instant, and then released them, and Junie flew up the broad stairway to her own room.

She missed Marie's gentle, soothing presence, for Marie, little Vic's nurse, had accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Markham and Vic to Poughkeepsie, where the school was situated.

"You do not care for me, Harry," she muttered, dreadingly, flinging herself upon her knees before her little white lace-draped bed, "and I will marry Arthur and live out my weary life until death releases me, which will be very soon. Oh, Father in heaven! how cruel Fanny was to threaten that she would expose to the world my terrible

secret unless I married Arthur at once!" she wailed out, sharply.

For an hour or more her terrible grief had full sway, moan after moan broke from her white lips, ending in heart-rending sobs. Alas! alas! what misery her love for Harry Granger had brought her!

She was so young, so pure, so innocent. Yet if the pitiless world once knew of the sin that was laid at her door, spotless as she was, who would believe her guiltless?

There was no one in the wide world, unless it was poor old Farmer Dean, to champion her cause and boldly defend her—fling back the taunts and jeers of a suspicious world, crying out, "She was only an innocent, artless, country lassie, ignorant as a babe of the wicked ways of the sin-steeped world!"

Love wooed her, and she trusted and believed as a spotless angel up in heaven would have heard and believed the words of its God. Poor little Junie, her senses were steeped in the wine of love, and what young heart is proof against Love's earnest, soulful pleading?

"She is like the frost—that smites the loveliest flowerets first."

CHAPTER XXXVI

FOR an hour or more Junie gave full vent to her passionate grief—weeping such tears as are wrung from the very heart by the most poignant grief.

But the fiercest storm must in time subside; and at last, utterly wearied out, Junie sunk down, all dressed as she was, upon her little white bed, with the prayer on her lips that God would let her die ere the sun rose on the morrow upon her wedding-day.

A strange, subtle silence seemed to pervade the room and weigh down Junie's eyelids in sleep, all unconscious of the deep, burning gaze of a pair of dark, piercing eyes

keenly watching her every movement from the deep shadows of the silken curtains.

At last, when fully confident that Junie slept, the curtains were slowly parted by a white, jeweled hand, and the figure of a woman stole stealthily toward the little white bed where Junie lay, and bent over her with bated breath.

One small, flickering ray of moonlight stole in through a chink in the curtains and fell full upon the white, set, determined face and glittering black eyes of the midnight intruder, revealing the features of Irene Carleton.

Irene Carleton's hands worked convulsively together as she noted the fair, golden beauty of the curly head lying back among the lace pillows, the slender white throat, and the heaving breast.

"Your beauty has been your curse, Junie Dean," she muttered, grimly. "I have sworn you shall not marry Arthur Seymour to-morrow, and you shall see how Irene Carleton will keep her word! To-morrow shall be her wedding-day," she muttered, with a little, hard, dry, stifled laugh—"yes, her wedding-day; but she shall have a cold, unsympathetic bridegroom, who will clasp her in his clammy embrace—for her bridegroom shall be death!"

No pity stirred her dark, designing heart as Junie's lips parted in a low, soft moan. Alas! there is little pity between women when the demons Love and Jealousy step in between them.

As Irene muttered the last words, she drew from her bosom a tiny vial of peculiar shape filled with a dark liquid, which she cautiously uncorked and sprinkled copiously upon the bed on which Junie lay.

In an instant a strange, subtle odor filled the room, curling like a vapor over the bed, then dissolving gradually as it permeated the room.

Irene escaped breathing it by holding a dampened handkerchief pressed close to her nostrils.

The first effect of the deadly drug was noticeable upon

the bouquet of roses that stood upon the mantle. One by one the leaves commenced to wither, curl up, and fall flutteringly down to the carpet, a dark, discolored mass, as though the tender buds and roses had been subjected to a fierce, scorching fire.

The color began to fade slowly from Junie's lips and flushed cheeks, fading to a deadly paleness.

{ No sound broke the terrible stillness of the awful hour.

{ The pendulum of the pretty ormolu clock on the mantel, too, seemed strangely affected by the stifling, oppressive drug, and ceased to vibrate, and finally stood still.

Cautiously summoning Dolly to assist her, Irene threw a long, dark cloak about Junie, and, with Dolly's aid, bore her swiftly down-stairs.

A coach stood in waiting near the door-way, and into this Junie was hastily placed.

With a few cautiously whispered directions, Dolly entered the coach with the unconscious girl, and in an instant it was out of sight. Then Irene, with a wicked smile on her thin, scornful lips, turned slowly and re-entered the house, to destroy all evidence of that night's dastardly work.

She threw open the windows, letting in the cool, sweet air of heaven, that no trace of the drug could be discovered, smoothed the counterpane, and gathered up the withered, blackened rose leaves into her handkerchief.

The carriage which contained Junie and Dolly had scarcely proceeded a dozen rods ere it passed an old man walking rapidly up the street, his carpet-bag in one hand and a thick hickory walking-stick in the other. A smile broke over his honest, toil-hardened face as he saw the vehicle approaching.

"It won't do no harm to stop that coachman and inquire the way to Mr. Markham's place," he soliloquized: and, suiting the action to the word, Farmer Dean—for it

was he—brandished his walking-stick, shouting lustily to the driver to “hold up a bit.”

But the driver only lashed his steeds into greater speed, dashing past the old man with lightning-like rapidity.

Was it only fancy? the farmer asked himself, in astonishment. Or did he really hear the piteous cries of a human voice, as if in mortal terror, from within the coach?

“It sounded like Junie’s voice, too,” muttered the farmer. “I could almost imagine I could hear my little girl crying out, ‘Oh, father, father, save me!’ I guess it’s because my mind is on poor little Junie so much that I have such odd notions,” he mused, standing still at the nearest gas-lamp, adjusting his spectacles, and rereading, for the twentieth time, the telegram he had received from Marie.

But the memory of the low, stifled cry which had seemed to emanate from the coach haunted him, he could not tell why.

“There’s all kinds of villainy afloat in a big city,” mused the farmer, “and perhaps there’s mischief going on there; danger may beset some young girl as pure and true as my little Junie. I think I’ll follow up that coach; it won’t be much out of my road, and just satisfy myself about that affair.”

It was a strange resolution for Farmer Dean to make; but it often happens in life that strange, unaccountable impulses seize us, casting us hither and thither at will, to meet the requirements of an ordained fate.

Thanks to his sturdy farm life, Farmer Dean was accustomed to walk mile after mile without fatigue, and he was enabled to keep the vehicle pretty nearly in sight.

It stopped before a large, commodious building in the heart of the city.

The farmer saw a young lady alight, heavily veiled; but beneath the folds of her veil a pale, yellowish curl escaped. She spoke a few words to the coachman, and he jumped

from his box, threw open the door of the carriage, lifting from the vehicle the slight body of a woman covered with a thick, dark cloak.

Then the trio mounted the broad marble steps, and quickly disappeared from sight within the door-way.

Those who gazed upon this quiet, aristocratic-appearing mansion from the exterior, would never have dreamed that it was a private hospital, where many of the fashionable New Yorkers, who were supposed to be "out of the city for a week or so," quietly rusticated from the effects of protracted champagne suppers, under the stringent rules of this most commendable establishment.

"Of all the places in the wide world, no one would think of looking for Junie *here*," thought Dolly, triumphantly, as she paced the floor, anxiously awaiting the madame's appearance.

That lady soon entered the room—a tall, dignified grand old lady, with a grave, stern face, and keenly searching, yet kindly blue eyes—who bowed pleasantly to the impatient Dolly, and begged her to "please be seated," wondering why her visitor seemed so confused and ill at ease.

Dolly Carleton nervously stated her errand at once. "This is my cousin, and an orphan, madame," she said, indicating Junie's rigid figure, "and I wish to place her in your establishment and under your special charge for a few weeks."

"What is the nature of her case?" asked madame, crossing over and removing the heavy folds of the cloak from the white, young face.

For a moment Dolly Carleton hesitated, and in that one moment she quite wished Irene had carried out her own plan herself; but she nerved herself to answer the cruel falsehood that would blacken her lips. Calmly, and with every indication of truth, she said, hesitatingly:

"My poor little cousin is—ah, I grieve to say it—an opium-eater, and all kinds of strange hallucinations fill her

poor fertile brain; she imagines each to-morrow is to be her wedding-day. She will talk with you, plead with you, madame, but you must pay no heed to her. She must be kept quiet by herself for a fortnight or more; she must see no one, talk to no one. We are a proud family, madame; there are skeletons in the chest of every household—my cousin's malady is ours."

"Poor child!" replied madame, compassionately, stroking Junie's tumbled, golden locks. "I think I understand. Good heavens!" cried the madame, bending still lower over Junie, "see how white she is—she does not breathe—the gray pallor of death is upon her!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"THAT is the natural color of those suffering with that peculiar malady," returned Dolly, quickly. "You need have no apprehensions upon that score, madame."

Thus assured, madame appeared relieved, and presently asked, as she drew a day-book from her pocket, "What is the name of my patient?"

"Her name is Ida Murray," replied Dolly, boldly, "and mine," she added, "is Clara Murray. I should prefer keeping our residence a secret for the present."

"As you please," returned madame, booking the names, and, after leaving a deposit in requirement with the rules of the house, Dolly Carleton took her departure, congratulating herself upon carrying out so cleverly Irene's ingenious scheme.

"Junie shall be kept there until the sensation of her disappearance and all search for her is over," she mused. "Then she shall be taken away where no human eye will ever rest upon the face of Junie Dean again. In time Harry Granger will learn to forget her. I will make it the study of my life to gain his love. He shall depend upon me for sympathy and consolation, and before the

first frost blights the blossoms, I shall be his wife. As for Arthur, he will think Junie has fled from him rather than marry him. He is quick-tempered, hotly, bitterly jealous, and all his love will fall back upon his own heart with redoubled force. He would die before he would let Junie see how the iron had entered his soul. I can see how it will end. Irene's patient love will be rewarded, and he will marry her on the spur of the moment out of pique. How strange it is that both Irene's lover and mine have loved Junie Dean."

Dolly re-entered the coach and it rolled rapidly away, leaving Farmer Dean gazing after it in front of the house, with a puzzled expression on his honest, toil-hardened face.

"They have left the other one inside," he muttered, in astonishment, "and I'll stake the best cow on the farm that there's foul play here somewhere. If I wasn't in such a hurry to see my little Junie, I'd stay around here and look into this mystery a bit. I've always heard of the dark ways of city life, but I always calculated it was more than half talk; but after witnessing such a scene as this at midnight, I'm beginning to think there's some truth in it after all."

Farmer Dean gazed wistfully up at the tall granite building as he spoke, as if loath to tear himself away.

Oh! if he had but known that those grim walls closed in his Junie from the outside world, the after events which are soon to follow would never have happened.

As the door closed behind Dolly's retreating footsteps, madame crossed over to the sofa upon which Junie lay, and gazed compassionately down into her lovely face.

"She is scarcely more than sixteen or seventeen," she mused. "How terrible that one so young and so lovely should have formed a taste for opium? If she were a child of mine, I would rather see her dead than the slave of such a pernicious habit. I can scarcely believe it. Yet her cousin could have had no motive in willfully deceiving

me. That grayish, unearthly pallor must have been produced by the drug. I shall be firm with her," commended the madame, half aloud, "and I will cure this lovely girl if I have to watch beside her night and day to accomplish it. But, first of all, I must see about preparing a room for her."

She walked slowly from the apartment as she spoke, and Junie was left alone. As the door closed softly, Junie sprung from the sofa with a little wild, stifled cry.

The fact is, the jolting of the vehicle and the action of the cold air upon her face had quite revived her, and by the time madame had entered the room Junie was in possession of her full faculties.

She heard with the most intense, breathless dismay the cruel falsehood Dolly Carleton uttered against her, and her cunning warning to the honest-hearted madame "to utterly ignore her pleadings." She heard the fictitious names Dolly had given, and her parting words that she was to be kept there a fortnight or more, and at the very thought of the awful conspiracy against her Junie had fainted outright in sheer terror. Junie did not stop to think how she had been brought into the house in which she now found herself—her one thought was to escape, and with the intuition that often comes to us when danger menaces us, she knew that whatever she did must be done at once, before madame had time to return.

Her head felt strangely dizzy, and it was with the utmost difficulty she could think clearly.

Hastily wrapping her cloak about her, Junie staggered toward the door.

It yielded to her touch, and like a startled bird who suddenly finds the door of its cage standing open and breathes the sweet air of freedom, Junie fairly flew down the winding corridors, past the astonished porter, and out into the street, her garments brushing against the stout,

burly figure of Farmer Dean, who stood under the gas-light glancing up at the house.

"What was there in that slight, swaying, girlish figure so familiar to him?" he asked himself, blankly, and again that unerring impulse prompted him to follow in close pursuit.

But young feet are more nimble than old ones. With every step the distance between them grew greater, until at length the little figure disappeared in the darkness altogether.

"Alone—at midnight—on the streets of New York," muttered Farmer Dean, compassionately. "Thank God, my little Junie is not in such peril!"

Oh! wicked city of New York—cruel, mysterious city of New York—where crime peeps forth with the setting sun and on-coming night, and stalks boldly abroad under the dim, flickering light of the stars!

As the last vibrations of the midnight hour died away in the tall towers and belfries, Junie threaded her way swiftly through the dark streets, trembling at every step, little heeding whither she went. In the distance the dark towers of the Brooklyn Bridge were dimly outlined against the dark, frowning heavens, toward which Junie unconsciously bent her steps.

"One leap from that bridge and all my troubles in this world would be over," she sighed—"my enemies could not track me beyond the gates of death."

A cold, drizzling rain was falling, and a thick gray mist was slowly curling up from the dark water.

Owing to the lateness of the hour and the storm, the bridge was almost deserted by all pedestrians, save the patrolmen slowly pacing their beats to and fro, who took little heed of the dark-robed, slender little figure gliding quietly along stealthily as a shadow.

About midway on the bridge she paused, casting quick, furtive glances to the right and to the left.

The words of Fanny still rang like a death-knell in her ears.

"If you do not marry Arthur Seymour to-morrow, and go far away, I will give forth on the morrow your shameful story. Who will believe you innocent and guiltless when the world hears of that week you spent with Harry Granger, nearly a year ago, yet you were not his wife? The world will scoff at you, and you will bring shame and disgrace upon us all. Your honor will be at stake, and ere the sun sets on the morrow your story will be blazoned before the world unless you marry Arthur Seymour at once, and go far away from here. This alone will purchase my silence for evermore."

"I see that I could never have married Arthur to-morrow," she sobbed, wringing her little white hands together, "for in spite of all the cruel wrong I have suffered, my heart is Harry's still. I have done no wrong knowingly, yet I am hunted down. There is no room for me in the great, cold, cruel world; it has narrowed down—to a grave."

"Oh, Harry, my love! my love!" she cried, "perhaps you will pity me when they tell you how I died, and, dying, loved you still, cruelly, bitterly, false though you were. No one knows of the dark secret I have guarded so well. The terrible truth can not be wrung from lips sealed in death. I forgive you, Fanny, for all your cruelty, and Irene and Dolly, I forgive you too."

She took the photograph of Harry Granger from her pocket and kissed it with such passionate, hungry, clinging kisses. "Let the world say I died in the cold, dark water; but you must not believe it, Harry; it is false, all false. I died of a broken heart! How can one live when one's heart is broken!

"Father," she murmured—"poor old papa, you, of all the world, will pity your heart-broken, miserable Junie. Good-bye, Harry," she wailed, and with the name of the

love whom she believed so false upon her lips, Junie plunged madly from the Brooklyn Bridge. There was a splash and a plaintive cry; then the waters of the East River flowed onward, without a ripple to show where they had closed over Junie's golden head.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE steamer "Alaska" was nearing port; but, owing to the rules and regulations of ocean life, it would not reach the wharf until late on the following morning.

A young man on board, impatient at the delay, which he could ill brook, had taken advantage of the permit he possessed to leave the vessel and board a small skiff, which was to land him at his destination many hours in advance of the time the "Alaska" was due. The little skiff fairly danced over the dark water, despite the adverse wind and waves and the cold, drizzling rain which had just set in.

Louis Arnold—for it was he—sat in the bow of the boat, watching with eager admiration the Brooklyn Bridge, which he was fast nearing, that rose dark, majestic, and silent, spanning the shadowy East River and clasping the two slumbering cities in its dark embrace.

The skiff swept under the great dark arch, and at that very instant a swift, startled cry broke the awful stillness of the hour, quickly followed by a dark-clad figure which leaped from the towering height of the great bridge suspended between water and sky down into the turbulent, seething waters of the East River.

"My God!" cried Louis Arnold, with a terrible cry, "a woman has leaped from the bridge, and she will come up directly under this skiff!"

In an instant the brave fellow had divested himself of both coat and hat and leaped into the dark, angry waves to the rescue of the would-be suicide. One terrible, thrilling moment followed; another, and still another; then the

dark, angry waves, as if loath to give up their prey, suddenly parted, and brave Louis Arnold, with the dark-robed figure held high in his arms, struck manfully out for the boat. Another moment and they were both aboard, rapidly nearing the New York shore.

The clear white light from the electric lamps shone full upon the upturned face, and an exclamation of intense surprise burst from Louis Arnold's lips as he noted how young and how gloriously beautiful this little creature was who was so bitterly tired of life—life which should have held such golden beauty for her.

They neared the shore rapidly, and Louis gathered up the slender little figure in his arms, and bore her into the waiting-room of the ferry-house just as Farmer Dean, panting and puffing with his long chase, reached the spot.

He recognized the slim little figure as the one he had been following, and at one glance at the water-soaked, dripping garments the truth flashed across his mind—the poor girl, whoever she was, had attempted to drown herself, and some one had rescued her.

The honest old farmer had a tender spot in his heart for all young girls on account of his Junie, and with a sympathetic tear coursing down his toil-hardened cheek for the sorrows of this forlorn little creature, he silently drew near.

They were just removing the folds of the cloak from about her, and the clear, steady rays of the gas-light fell full upon her white face.

For one instant the eyes of the old farmer rested upon her, then a hoarse, piercing, piteous cry echoed through the room that those who heard it never forgot to their dying day.

"Oh, my God!" cried the agonized old man, flinging himself upon his knees beside that still form. "God pity me! It is my little Junie! Junie, Junie!—little Junie!" he cried, utterly ignoring the by-standers in his terrible

agony, "look up and speak to your poor old father, little pet! God help me, my heart is broken, Junie! This is more than man can bear!"

Strong-hearted men who stood around him, who, perchance, had children of their own whom they loved just as dearly, turned away with tears coursing down their cheeks, whispering to each other that this was the most pitiful scene they had ever beheld.

The old farmer would let no one approach his child; he gathered her up, just as he had done in her babyhood—gathered her up in his shaking arms, straining her close to his heart, all cold and wet, with the dripping river-water trickling from her clothing in little rills, calling upon her by every endearing name to open her pretty blue eyes and speak to him.

"Leave me alone with my child," he wailed. "My grief is too great for the eyes of strangers to witness."

"See, she is not dead!" they whispered, one to the other; "she is reviving, her eyelids quiver, her hands move!" And they all silently quitted the room, leaving the poor old farmer alone with his beloved child, still calling her name and entreating her to speak to him.

It almost seemed as though that agonized, familiar voice had the power to draw her back from the very brink of death.

Suddenly the white, golden-lashed lids flashed open wide, and Junie gazed up into his face with a soft, low, contented sigh; then, with a terrible sob, she shrunk away from him, struggling from his arms and cowering on her knees at his feet.

"Do not touch me, papa," she sobbed, wildly, drawing back from his honest, toil-hardened, outstretched hands. "You must not touch me, papa," she whispered, "for I have committed a great sin. I was so innocent that I did not know. Yet Fanny says that will not excuse the fault—it was still a sin. I tried so hard to repent of it, papa,

and I could not, and that was a double sin; and, to atone for it, I tried to die and end it all—oh, why, why did they not let me die?"

The face of the old farmer had grown strangely pale, as he listened to little Junie's wild, disconnected story.

"No matter what you have done, little Junie, your father will always find pardon for you in his heart," he cried, brokenly, lifting up the shrinking figure again, and holding her close in his arms. "You must tell your poor old father what has happened. No sin has touched my little Junie," he muttered, plaintively. "No, no, you are as pure as an angel, little Junie; you do not know what sin is; why should you speak such a word? Where is your husband, Junie?" he asked, suddenly, a new dread foreboding of coming evil chilling his heart like a blasting frost.

Junie sprung again from his encircling arms, and stood pantingly before him, the color coming and going on her lovely young face, as she nerved herself for the awful confession.

"Promise me you will not curse Harry, or wreak your vengeance on him, and I will tell you all, truthfully, papa," she said.

The farmer's lips twitched convulsively, and Junie believed he had promised.

The farmer scarcely breathed in his intense wrath, as the poor child cowered down at his feet and told him all her pitiful story; surely, the saddest that was every wrung from a young girl's lips.

"I believed so truly in our marriage," she sobbed, piteously, "that when he came to me that day at the hotel, and told me it was only a mock marriage we had gone through, I fell on my knees and begged him to take then and there the life he had so cruelly destroyed; but he turned on his heel, and, with a mocking laugh on his lips, left me alone, to live or to die of a broken heart."

The farmer started to his feet, with eyes fairly blazing, uttering the deepest curses and hurling the most terrible maledictions that ever issued from a man's outraged heart before.

Never before in all the years of his life had Farmer Dean been worked up to such a pitch of indignation, rage, and mighty fury.

He strode up and down the length of the room, his honest, toil-hardened hands clinched tight, spots of foam flecking his stern, set, rigid lips, and his blazing eyes flashing luridly.

Junie had never seen her father like this before, and for one awful moment she believed the recital of her wrongs had driven her father mad, and she was greatly terrified.

In her story she had repeated over and over again how dearly she loved Harry still—false though he was—and that a blow struck at Harry's heart would reach hers first—she loved him so.

In her recital, Junie had faithfully given every detail; unwittingly mentioning that Harry was now visiting the Markhams, from whence Dolly had so mysteriously taken her.

"I have always been an honest, God-fearing man," muttered the farmer to himself, as he strode up and down the room; "but there are some crimes that can only be washed out with blood, and this is one of them. I will bring her face to face with this wretch, and then and there an outraged father's heart shall have full vengeance—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a heart for a heart. Ay, and a terrible vengeance it shall be! I shall show him less mercy than he has shown my child. Junie, my child," he said, stopping short before her, and speaking in a strangely stifled, changed voice, as he took her hand, "I want you to come quietly with me, dear. Ask no questions. You can trust your father, my little girl. Your sorrow is his. Come along, Junie, my pet."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE sun broke bright and clear from a cloudless sky the next morning, as though to atone for the chill and the storm and the darkness of the night before.

In the library of Mr. Markham's magnificent home Harry Granger was pacing up and down, fighting the greatest battle with his own heart that man ever fought. His handsome head drooped low upon his breast, and the pain on his white face deepened as he muttered, hoarsely and bitterly:

"My God! I can not stay here and see my little Junie married to another, for she is mine—yes, mine in the sight of Heaven! I am growing desperate. How will it all end?"

Yet in the face of all his misery, which was harder to bear than death itself, his great heroic pride bore him up.

"If I were to fly from her presence she would scorn my weakness. No, no, I must manfully bear it. She is nothing to me. Was she not freed from the tie that bound us by her own free will? She must not know how deeply the iron has entered my soul!"

Every impulse would have directed Harry Granger to fly; yet some subtle, unfathomable fate seemed to hold him spell-bound, a victim on the altar of indomitable pride.

From the window where Harry stood he could see Arthur Seymour walking up and down the sunlit garden, glancing ever and anon up in the direction of Junie's window with all of a happy lover's devotion on his face and in his twinkling, upraised eyes; and the sight maddened Harry Granger as nothing had ever done in his whole life before.

At that instant a carriage drove up to the porch, and

from it a lady and gentleman alighted. It needed no second glance to tell Harry the mocking truth. It was his uncle—Squire Granger—and his young wife, and they had come for the express purpose of seeing Junie married to Arthur Seymour.

The very humiliation crowded into the thought nearly staggered Harry for a moment.

"Do they know that I am here, a guest under the same roof?" he asked himself, nervously.

Ah, yes; they must know it. Junie had in all probability told them the whole story from beginning to end.

"I will stay here and face it out," he exclaimed, resolutely, his face growing deathly white. "I will gaze on the ceremony with a smile on my lips, and if my uncle dares question me about the past, I shall say, simply: 'We both agreed together that we never could agree.'"

The door opens softly, and Dolly Carleton steals into the room. Even in his sorrow, Harry Granger can not help but notice how flushed and startled she appears, and how her steel-blue eyes glitter with a feverish light in their depths.

She does not see him, and some unaccountable impulse causes him to draw back among the heavy draperies of the bay-window until she should leave the room.

He feels that Dolly's senseless chatter would drive him mad to-day. He is in no mood to smile or jest.

Dolly is not alone, swift footsteps are following, and Irene, a trifle paler than Dolly, under all her rouge, hurriedly enters the room, closing the door after her. The two sisters cross over to a silken divan so near to the bay-window that Harry Granger could have put out his hand and touched them from where he stood.

Harry Granger was a gentleman of honor and would have scorned anything so contemptible as to listen to that which was not intended for his ears. He was just about to step forth from the bay-window, when a sentence fell

from Irene's lips that held him spell-bound, with an eager intensity that was beyond his power to control.

From the divan upon which Irene and Dolly sat they, too, could see Arthur Seymour pacing up and down the garden, with that lover-like smile on his face as he raised his eyes in the direction of Junie's room.

"Fool!" hissed Irene, her glowing, black eyes following Arthur's retreating form; "how little he thinks of the surprise in store for him; he grows anxious as the wedding hour draws near. Bask in the sun of your fool's paradise an hour longer, haughty Arthur, before the news will be broken to you that there will be no wedding to-day—your charming bride has flown, and in the moment when he feels the force of the blow the keenest—ay, in that glorious moment my revenge will be the sweetest. No one must ever know of last night's work," continued Irene. "It would be dangerous for both of us if any one were to even suspect we knew where she was."

"No one can ever find out where we have secreted Junie, for I have followed your instructions too carefully for that," retorted Dolly, emphatically. "It shall be a dead secret between us forever. But when the two weeks are up, where do you propose to take Junie?" asked Dolly, as they both arose from the divan and walked toward the door.

For answer Irene laughed, and there was so much envy, bitterness, and hate concentrated in it, that it made the blood grow cold in Harry Granger's veins.

They had both reached the door, through which they quickly passed, and the reply Irene made to Dolly's question did not reach the ears strained so eagerly to catch it.

"Am I mad? do I dream? or have my ears deceived me?" muttered Harry Granger. "What can they have meant by declaring there would be no wedding to-day? What secret is this, that these two sisters are so zealously guarding? Are they plotting against my little Junie?"

No, surely not. I must get at the bottom of this mystery—if mystery there is."

In a moment his brow cleared, and he laughed aloud.

"How foolish I was to imagine such nonsense!" he muttered. "Irene and Dolly are probably planning some mischievous prank. I believe I am growing as nervously fanciful as a woman."

He reseated himself in the bay-window, giving himself up to his own bitter reflections without restraint, at one moment pleading with himself to break away without an instant's delay, then arguing the point with himself, assuring himself it was not weakness that held him there, but pride—pride which bade him manfully meet Junie upon equal grounds. How long he sat there trying to convince himself of this fact, with his head buried dejectedly in his white hands, he never knew. The sound of his own name upon familiar lips aroused him from his reverie.

Harry had a fine view of the interior of the room from among the shadows where he sat, being himself quite unobserved. Harry glanced up, and a dark, angry fire leaped into his eyes and paled his handsome face as his gaze fell upon his uncle, Squire Granger, and his wife. But he could not help marveling at the great apparent change in his haughty, overbearing, quarrelsome uncle.

The old man's eyes quailed under the glance of his wife's bold, black eyes, and as she spoke to him sharply his knees smote together, and his whole frame trembled like a sailor who is expecting a hurricane to momentarily overtake and wreck his bark.

It was certain that a quarrel of no small dimensions was brewing between the ill-mated pair, and it was equally apparent that the old squire would meet his match in attempting to bandy words with his irate young wife.

The squire had timidly ventured to caress her, but she pushed him from her with all the concentrated force and

rage she was capable of; and to make the affair all the more ludicrous the clumsy old squire lost his balance and measured his full length on the carpet, so near to the bay-window in which Harry sat that his hands brushed against the old man's clothes as he struggled meekly to his feet.

Harry Granger would have stepped forth then and there from his place of concealment had it not been for the humiliation he knew his proud old uncle would suffer if he even guessed his domestic infelicity was witnessed by the nephew whom he had disinherited and forbidden to ever cross his threshold.

So, out of respect to his uncle's feelings, Harry Granger forebore from making his presence known, and that one action was the turning-point of his eventful life, for "when rogues fall out honest men get their dues." The old adage was truly exemplified in this case.

"You are cruel as death to me, Fanny!" cried the old man, plaintively, as he regained his feet. "I have given you all my love, my wealth. I have disinherited my only living relatives for you. I have run my neck almost into state prison for you, Fanny, and have willingly carried out your schemes of vengeance against poor Harry, and yet the more of a slave I am to your whims, the more you seem to hate me," he sighed.

"Have done with your nonsense from this time henceforth," cried Fanny. "You may as well know the truth first as last, and it will doubtless save me no end of annoyance. Yes, I hate you, Squire Granger; it was your gold I married, not you. I will tell you another secret, too. I loved your nephew, Harry Granger, but when I saw that he turned from me to Junie, I swore a terrible oath of vengeance, and you have been an easy tool in carrying out the plans of our conspiracy which separated Junie and Harry so successfully."

CHAPTER XL.

HARRY GRANGER sat perfectly still, scarcely breathing, lest he should lose one word that fell from their lips.

"The conspiracy which had parted Junie and him so successfully." He repeated the words over to himself, leaning back among the curtains, fairly overcome for the moment by the strange thoughts that flashed across his brain.

He had always wondered why Junie had left him. He had pondered upon the subject until he was fairly heart-sore over the mystery.

"Was the solution of her strange, unaccountable action to be made clear at last?" he asked himself, breathlessly.

Harry had no scruples in listening intently now. He told himself it was almost a matter of life and death with him.

He saw his uncle's face grow a dull, purplish red, and he heard him groan aloud, as the mocking, scathing words fell from his young wife's curling lips.

"Then you have made a terrible dupe of me, Fanny!" cried the squire, in a low, intense voice. "I can see it all now—even as stupid an old fool as you think me, I can see through the whole thing. You had but one thought in your mind when you proposed the startling proposition to me to marry little Junie and release your father's mortgage. You wanted to remove little Junie from Harry's path by marrying her—to me!"

"I can only wonder that that startling thought did not occur to you before," sneered Fanny, readjusting her diamond bracelet impatiently; "old brains are not very fertile in seizing ideas, though, it would seem."

The flush on the squire's face grew a still deeper red,

but he went on, never noticing her insulting reference to "old brains."

"It was you, too, who proposed the daring scheme of following Harry and his bride on to New York, and inducing her twin brother Henry to lend himself to the villainous plot you had concocted against Harry, promising to make him my heir if he complied."

The retort which sprung to Fanny's lips was never uttered, for in the door-way stood Henry Granger, bowing and smiling to the discomfited husband and wife in a way that certainly meant mischief.

"Speak of angels and you hear the rustle of their wings," said Henry Granger, grimly, closing the door after him, and begging the squire and his wife to pray be seated, as he wished an audience with them for a very few moments on most important business.

"As our time is limited we can give you but a moment, and I prefer to remain standing," retorted Fanny, coolly and defiantly.

Without noticing her remark, Henry Granger turned to his uncle, whose eyes fell beneath the scorching fire of his nephew's mocking, steady gaze.

"You have taken great care to elude me, my dear uncle," he said, mockingly, "and I have had a hard time tracing you about, and now—"

"Well, now that you have found him, what do you want?" broke in Fanny, glowering darkly at Henry Granger, who sat regarding her so scornfully with his bold, flashing eyes.

"Patiently, madame, patiently, if you please," he replied, *sotto voce*. "I am coming to that point directly. It is rather rude breaking into so delicate a subject at once, but if your ladyship so wills it, I shall be only too pleased to waive ceremony, and come to the point at once by saying I am here for no other purpose than to force my

uncle to keep his contract with me, of signing the necessary papers which shall make me his heir."

A low, mocking laugh fell from Fanny's thin, curling lips, as she replied:

"Then know at once that your aspirations in that direction are all in vain. Squire Granger is little less than a pauper; he does not own a dollar's worth in the world, for the simple reason that he signed over his entire fortune to me on the day that we were married."

"Then it is with you I must make terms," replied Henry Granger, sarcastically. "If you would not have me betray the secret which I hold to my brother Harry this very day—ay, this very hour—you must share equally Squire Granger's fortune with me, dollar for dollar."

Squire Granger attempted to answer, but Fanny fairly took the words out of his mouth.

"Are you mad?" she screamed, her shrill voice rising higher and higher with every word. "Do you think I would give a penny of the money I have almost sold my soul for to you? I hate you, Henry Granger, for your fatal resemblance to your twin brother, whom I loved so madly—and all in vain!"

She fairly hissed the words, and her jeweled fingers worked convulsively in the intensity of her tigerish fury.

"You have played your shrewd little game with wonderful cleverness, madame, but you will find your match in me. Harry, my brother, is in this house at this very moment, and he would give every penny of his fortune to know the terrible secret I have guarded so well, and have little Junie restored to his arms again."

A deep, hoarse, muffled exclamation burst from behind the curtains of the bay-window, but the trio were so excited they did not even hear it.

The last words that fell from Henry Granger's lips exasperated the furious woman to a pitch fairly bordering on frenzy.

"Junie restored to Harry Granger's arms!" she screamed. "Ha! ha! I have taken too much pains to part them for life for such an event as that to transpire. He believes that she willfully deserted him, and you dare not reveal your devilish work in that affair. Why, man, if the people knew what you have done, you would never have time to make one plea for mercy. Before you had time to accuse the squire or me with conspiring in this affair, your brother would strike you down dead at his feet in his thirst for vengeance!"

She fairly panted from exhaustion, and glared at Henry Granger like a very fiend who knew the full extent of her power and the other's weakness.

It was now Henry Granger's turn to whiten to a gray pallor under the fire of her scalding words.

But he had determined to scare her into handing over some of the wealth which had cost him such a price, if it lay in the power of mortal man to do it.

"There is more than one way of accomplishing such an object," he replied, with exasperating coolness. "Unless you make it an object for me to hold my peace, I shall send for Harry at once, and, after binding him by an oath not to wreak his vengeance upon me, I will reveal to him the whole of this villainous affair. I shall make a clean breast of it by confessing how you came on to New York, and bribed me by promising to make me your heir if I, through my fatal resemblance to my twin brother, would personate him and carry out your instructions, as you know no mortal man, woman, or child—not even his little bride—could tell the difference between Harry and myself. I will confess to Harry how I was to present myself at her room, pretending that I was the young husband whom she married; and upon the first plausible pretext I was to turn upon little Junie and coolly inform her that I was tired of her, and wished, from the bottom of my soul, I had not brought her away from the farm, for the marriage

she believed in was no marriage at all. I had deceived her, and, what was still worse, wearied of her."

"Ha, ha, ha!" screamed Fanny, shrilly. "How well you remember your part in the programme! But you are not called upon to rehearse your part—the play is over."

"You thought little Junie would go back to the farm and be ever after at your mercy," sneered Henry Granger; "but she did not do it, and your after-persecutions availed you nothing—even the divorce which you applied for in her name has been set aside, from the simple fact that little Junie never even knew of such an occurrence being set on foot."

There was an ominous, deadly click of a revolver behind the silken curtains of the bay-window, and, with a terrible cry that his listeners never forgot, Harry Granger, the bitterly outraged, deluded young husband, dashed from his place of concealment in the bay-window, and like an avenging Nemesis, suddenly confronted them; but before he could utter one scathing syllable of the fiery words that burned on his lips, and which would have ended in one of the most horrible of tragedies, the door was suddenly burst open, and Farmer Dean, with Junie clinging, pale as a snow-drop, to his arm, strode into the room, stopping short, in the greatest of dismay, as his eyes fell upon the twin brothers, the exact counterparts of each other, who stood face to face, one of them holding a revolver at the other's breast.

At the sight of Junie, his beloved little bride, whose action all the way through was as clear as noonday to him now, Harry Granger dropped the revolver, and it fell upon the soft velvet carpet with a dull thud.

At the first sight of Junie and the white, passionate face of her father, Fanny Dean sunk back upon the sofa, but no one noticed how the grayish pallor deepened over her ~~fair~~ face, and how glazed her eyes were growing, so intense was the excitement elsewhere.

Harry Granger tried to speak, but no sound issued from his white, set lips. He could not have spoken or moved hand or foot if his life had depended upon it, as he remembered his brother's confession, and the bitterness with which poor little deceived Junie was regarding him.

It was hard to tell what thought was teeming in Henry Granger's brain, as he took in at a glance the terrible vengeance written upon the farmer's face and flashing luridly from his eyes.

Henry dared not confess then and there. He knew that his life would pay the penalty, and even to the most desperately wicked villains life seems sweet when it is in jeopardy, and he vowed to himself that no one could wring the truth from his guilty lips, let come what would.

Only a single instant had elapsed since Farmer Dean had crossed the threshold, but it seemed to both of the twin brothers and to poor, bewildered, startled Junie a whole dark, limitless age.

"Which of these two men is the one?" cried the farmer, keeping between them and the door, which he had taken the precaution to close and securely fasten. "Point out the one, daughter, and I will show him less mercy than I would a serpent beneath my heel!"

The clinging clasp upon the farmer's arm grew heavier.

"I am growing mad, papa!" cried Junie, desperately. "Save me—save me, papa—my brain reels—my senses are slipping away from me! I see two forms and two faces side by side, and the darkness of death seems to close around them both!"

CHAPTER XLI.

"THERE are two forms and two faces. Don't you see that there are twin brothers standing before you, face to face? And I ask you again, which of these two has done

this cruel wrong? Point him out, daughter, that I may visit the full force of a father's just wrath upon him."

He saw that Junie's face was growing whiter each moment, and for a brief instant he really thought that her brain was reeling, and she was indeed losing her reason.

Harry Granger would have given all he possessed in the world to break the terrible spell that seemed to bind in a vise his every faculty; and the horror of the situation in which he found himself seemed mirrored in the fixed, intent gaze which never left Junie's face—even Henry gazed into her face with a strangely fascinated glance.

"You must point out the one who has dared to tell you he deceived you, and that you were not his wife. Speak, girl, I say, or, so help me Heaven, I will slay them both, that I may be sure to punish the right one!"

Junie knew that her father would keep his word, and that she must speak quickly. Her eyes had grown accustomed to the soft, shaded light of the room, and she saw that it was no hallucination, but twin brothers actually stood before her. Heaven help her! how could she choose between them? Her heart throbbed tumultuously. Which of these two men was Harry? She had never known of the existence of a twin brother, and this new phase of affairs fairly staggered her.

She nerved herself for the trying ordeal, taking one step hesitatingly forward, scanning intently those two faces that Heaven had made so fatally alike.

Of these two, which was the man she loved? No young girl's love was ever put to such a terrible test in the whole wide world before—there never had been such a terrible love-test in history or in fiction.

Before her stood the young husband whom she had wedded—the husband whom she still so dearly loved, and who would have given his life's blood to have saved her one moment's pain and been able to speak and defend himself; and beside him stood the treacherous twin brother

who had worked such ruinous woe in their dark, dreary past.

It was a terrible, thrilling moment!

Henry Granger's eyes never fell nor faltered in their fearless gaze.

Then she turned to Harry Granger, her young husband, and she raised her clear, pure young voice, crying out, as she pointed to Harry:

"My whole heart goes out to this one, father; every instinct of true love tells me this is the one whom I married."

In an instant the farmer's arm was raised to smite him down, but Junie caught his arm and clung to it like a vise, and in that instant a passing breeze stole in through the curtains, lifting the dark, curling locks sportively from Henry Granger's brow, distinctly revealing the crescent mark which Junie had noticed upon his brow as he stood before her declaring she was not his wife, and that the marriage was only a mockery. Then like a flash she cried out, huskily:

"I married this one, father. This is Harry, and, oh, merciful Heaven! what terrible mystery is this? It was that one who came to me that day, casting me off, telling me I was no wife, and that he was tired of me," she cried, pointing to Henry, whose face had suddenly paled to a dead-white hue. "I know him by the scar upon his forehead. I noticed it at that awful moment!"

But before Farmer Dean could reach the spot where Henry Granger stood, he had stooped down and picked up the revolver.

There was a flash and a report, and Henry Granger, with the spasmodic word "forgive" trembling on his sinful lips, fell lifeless at the feet of the brother he had so foully wronged. His life had paid the forfeit of his crime!

The flash of the revolver had broken the spell that bound poor Harry's senses, and with one mad leap he had

reached little Junie's side, clasping her madly to his heart, and covering her face, her hands, and her hair with hot, burning, passionate kisses; while in broken words he poured forth the story of his wrongs and sufferings, and the confession he had just overheard between the trio whom he had faced as they had entered the room.

In the tumult Squire Granger had escaped. Fanny still lay there where she had fallen rigid and white. One glance at her white, stony face told its own story—she was dead.

Startling explanations followed of the events which happened on both sides, from the moment they parted at the hotel with such tender caresses up to the present time; those events which the reader is already familiar with in the past pages of this romance.

After the matter had been made thoroughly clear to poor old Framer Dean, he placed little Junie in her adoring young husband's arms, saying, huskily, as he turned away:

"As no divorce was granted, my little pet is still your bride. Take her, my son, and with her I give you the blessing of her old father, and all the recompense I ask is that you make her happy. The dark blot which shadowed the past will never be remembered in the sunshine of the future."

He turned away as he spoke, and Harry led little Junie from the room where such a terrible ordeal had just been gone through into the parlor opposite, refraining from telling her just yet of the cruel fate that had overtaken her designing sister Fanny.

That sweet reconciliation, as they sat there on the sofa clasped in each other's arms, was worth all the pain that those two hearts had suffered.

And an hour later Arthur Seymour entered and found them seated thus.

"I have heard all," he said, addressing Harry, in a

husky voice. "Heaven help me! I loved her, too, but I will manfully struggle to forget her; she will be happy with you, for her heart has been with you from the very first. There is one request I would like to ask," he said, mournfully, addressing Harry, "and that is to kiss Junie just once, for I am putting her out of my heart and life forever."

Harry could feel that Junie trembled as she heard Arthur's words.

"Kiss him as a sister would," whispered Harry. "It will not be wrong, for I sanction it—he suffers so."

Junie raised her fair young face, and Arthur stooped down and impressed a kiss upon her forehead, just as he would have kissed her if she had been lying before him cold in death; then he turned swiftly and, as he had said, passed out of the life of the young girl he had loved so well forever. Junie never divulged the conspiracy Irene and Dolly had planned, and so nearly executed, against her liberty, and perhaps her life.

That the scandal-mongers might never know the dark secret that lay in the shadow of their paths and wonder over it, Junie and Harry had the wedding ceremony performed again, and in speaking of the grand affair the papers did not fail to tell the public that the little bride and the heroine who so bravely saved the life of Mr. Markham's little daughter Vic, which at the time elicited so much admiration and comment, were one and the same; and beautiful little Junie's marriage to wealthy Harry Granger was the topic of the day in social circles.

Irene and Dolly Carleton and Mr. Markham's wife never visits at the palatial mansion on Fifth Avenue, which is now Junie's home, and perhaps they best know why. But little Vic and Junie are firm, tried, and true friends, and she has no sympathy with her envious step-mother, and Irene and Dolly who are sure to be old maids to the

end of the chapter—because they do not love beautiful, golden-haired Junie.

But Junie does not care what the outside world may think, for her life is bound up in her adoring young husband's love. Their life is a perpetual honey-moon, and when young wives ask her how this is, she nestles her golden head upon Harry's broad shoulder and answers, shyly, through her blushes:

"My Harry keeps no secrets from me, and makes no appointments with friends on steamers without telling me all about it, as every husband should, so that no terrible mistakes can occur to mar our happy lives; and then we love each other so very dearly."

And Harry lovingly echoes her words, and adds, mischievously:

"Nor never in this world was there a test of love that could equal my little Junie's Love-Test."

THE END.

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